

By William T. Tutley



1st Edition  
St. John, Indiana  
1837 to 1980  
Printed 1981

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2nd Edition  
Revised and Re-titled  
St. John, Indiana  
1837 to 1987  
150 Years

Printed in 1987  
By

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## PREFACE

The first book, "St. John, Indiana, 1937 - 1980", has been updated to 1987, along with revisions and additions in the part that cover the early years of St. John. The book has also been re-titled to reflect the first 150 years of the town. 1987 is the 150th anniversary of the arrival of John Hack, a German immigrant, to what is now St. John.

Even though this revised version contains additional information, I know there is more information that I have not had the time to uncover. Perhaps some day some person, interested in history will find this information and add it to what is already known.

WILLIAM T. TULEY



#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There were many people who assisted me in a variety of ways, including gathering information for this book. For their assistance I am grateful, as it would have been an impossible task otherwise.

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Roscoe Protsman's History of the St. John Township School System.

"Encyclopedia of Geneology and Biography of Lake County" by T.H. Ball.

Centennial Edition of "The History of Lake County, Volume XI" by Demmon, Little, McNay and Taylor.

"Counties of Lake and Porter" by Goodspeed and Blanchard.

"Lake County Indiana, 1834 to 1872" by Timothy H. Ball.

"The Diocese of Fort Wayne" published by Right Reverend H. J. Aldering in 1907.



## DEDICATION

This book on the history of St. John is dedicated to the many pioneer families who came to this area, then called Western Prairie, or Prairie West. They arrived when the area was truly a wilderness. Most of the first settlers came from Germany. They suffered and endured the primitive life, but they stayed, building homes, tilling the soil, and building businesses. They married and raised families. They built churches and schools. They came here to fashion new lives for themselves, and they were successful, but probably most important to them, they owned their own land in a free country. They changed a wilderness area into the Town of St. John.



## THE BEGINNING

It is generally agreed that the Town of St. John had its beginning when John Hack, a German immigrant farmer and his family arrived in 1837, in the area then known as Western Prairie or Prairie West. To fully appreciate that this man and his family came to a wilderness area to start a new life, one must go back a few years prior to this date.

The Indiana Territory was organized in 1800 and was admitted to the Union as a state in December of 1816. At that time, the entire northwestern part of the state was a true American Wilderness, and the area that was to be Lake County was a part of this vast wilderness.

It was in 1832, after the peace treaty with the Indians, when the United States purchased this northwestern part of Indiana from the Indians. The first government surveyors arrived in 1834 to survey the area into sections and townships. The population at that time was mostly Indians, although the majority of them were located on the banks of the Kankakee River and the Calumet River. A handful of settlers had come into the area that is now Crown Point, and a few others had settled at the mouth of the Calumet River in the Brunswick area. In the area of St. John and St. John Township there were no settlers, only a few roving Indians.

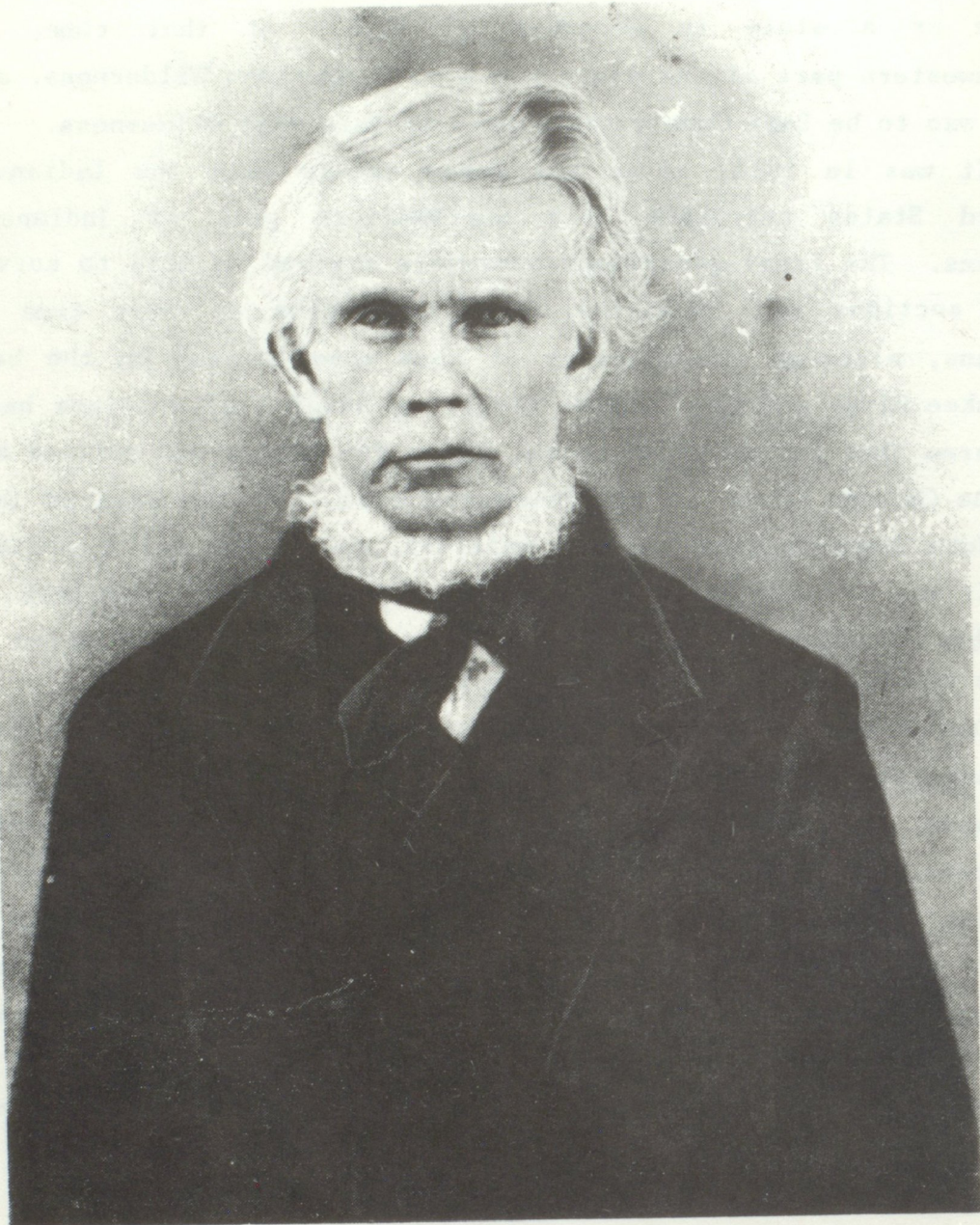
It was to this beautiful, lonely wilderness that John Hack, a newcomer to this country, and his family came, just five years after the Indian peace treaty, and here he built his home in the new land.

One likes to speculate why Hack and others who followed him from Germany, chose this area to settle. The logical conclusion is that after the area was surveyed, the government opened it up to settlers at a very low cost. Hack, and those who followed, were farmers and owned no land in Germany. They worked for the large landowners in their Fatherland. They didn't earn much, nor did they spend much, so they were able to save much of the meager pay they received. Over here was the opportunity to own their own land and build their own homes, beholden to no one other than their ability to sacrifice and make it on their own. They were a hardy group of people.

Solid facts and details about pioneer life in St. John seem to be somewhat difficult to come by. The hard working early settlers, attempting to make a life for themselves in a new and different land, had scant time



or inclination to set down their thoughts, feelings and experiences for the benefit of posterity. Thus the historian must gain what glimpses of that life that he can from surviving materials. The paucity of materials, however, has created a situation where most local history books relating the growth and development of Lake County and its communities shed little light on St. John's past.



John Hack





Johanna, wife of John Hack

Reputedly a man of far-sighted vision and considerable leadership ability, Hack welcomed other immigrants from his native land who settled nearby shortly after his arrival and foresaw the establishment of a flourishing and prosperous community here. Tall, dignified and patriarchal in manner, Hack was born in 1787 in a Rhine province that some time before has passed from French to Prussian control.



Upon his arrival locally, accompanied by his wife, Hannah, and a large family, he immediately settled on a forty acre piece of land located approximately one half mile east of present Route 41 and south of Joliet Street. The land was purchased from the Department of the Interior, and the deed, which still exists, bore the signature of President John Tyler. John Hack's name was carried on the deed as "John Hawk", a mis-spelling that was later corrected when he made his second land purchase in 1844. This second purchase was bounded roughly by 93rd Street, Olcott Avenue, Forrest Street and U.S. Route 41. In 1842, Hack constructed a peach brandy distillery. It had to be, if not the first, one of the earliest businesses established in the community.

The following are translated, typewritten copies of the certificate of marriage of John Hack and Janet Schneider, the certificates of birth of the eleven Hack children, a letter of recommendation that Hack brought with him from Germany, and a copy of the original deed of Hack's first land purchase. It is interesting to note throughout these documents that Hack's wife is listed as Johanna, Johanneta, Hanna, Jane and Janet. This evidently came about in the translation from German to English many years ago.

#### CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE

The year 1807 the fourth day of the month of August at 10 o'clock on the morning before us, Assistant to the Mayor of Weierweiler perform the duties of the officer of the civil state of the community of Nunhirchen, reporting at said town hall, District of Wavern, Department of Saar, has appeared Monsieur John Hack age 18 years, born at Neiderlosheim the 18th of November, 1788, occupation of laborer, living at Nunhirchen, minor son of Monsieur Pierre Hack, occupation of laborer, living at Niederlosheim, consenting and agreeing, but do not know how to sign, and of Lady Janet Ross, agreeing and consenting, but not knowing how to sign, and Janet Schneider, age 19 years, born at Nunhirchen on the 7th of September 1787, occupation of embroider, living at Nunhirchen, daughter of Mayor Monsieur Joseph Schneider, occupation of Mayor and Tanner, living at Nunhirchen, agreeing and consenting and of Lady Janet Klaeser agreeing and consenting which ones future husband and wife have required us to proceed with the solemnization of the marriage planned between them and of which the publications having been made on the front of the main door of our community house the first one on the fourteenth of the month of June in the year 1807 at ten o'clock in the morning, and the second, the twenty-first of the month of June of the current year at ten o'clock in the morning. No opposition to said marriage



having been made to us, and all required legal formalities according to law having been fulfilled, as well as the results of the alleged documents here--furthermore the Assistant officer of the civil state at the town hall of Weierweiler causing to unite before us according to regulations after having made the reading of all the aforesaid documents mentioned and in chapter 6 of the title of the civil code entitled, Marriage, have asked the future husband and the future wife if they wish to take each other for husband and wife: each one of them having answered separately and in the affirmative, let us declare in the name of the law that Monsieur John Hack and Miss Janet Schneider are united in marriage; of which we have witnessed in the presence of John Zimmer living at Nunhirchen, Department of Saar, occupation of tax collector, age 39 years; Mathias Lillig, living at Nunhirchen, Department of Saaar, occupation of constable, age 36 years; Francis Klaeser living at Nunhirchen, Department of Saar, occupation of laborer, age 66, grandfather of the bride and Pierre Klaeser living at Nunhirchen, Department of Saar, occupation laborer, age 32 years, cousin of the bride, who after the reading has been finally given to them, have signed it before us and the contracting parties. Given at Nunhirchen the day, month, and year in the presence of the Assistant of Nunhirchen.

/s/ Foprummal Hack  
 /s/ Foprunic Schneider  
 /s/ F. Schneider

/s/ Friruz Klaeser  
 /s/ Katar Klaeser  
 /s/ Mathias Lillig

/s/ P. Fohentgen, Assistant

\*\*\*\*\*

#### NO. 16 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

The year 1809, the fifteenth of the month of February at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the Mayor coming to us performing the duties of the officer of the civil state in the townhall of Losheim, District of Nertzig, Department of Saar, appeared John Hack age 21 years, occupation of laborer living at Niederlosheim who has presented to us a male child born at Niederlosheim the fourteenth day of the month of February at four o'clock in the afternoon, to him John Hack occupation of laborer living at Niederlosheim and Jane Schneider his wife and to which child he has declared to wish to give the name John, the said declaration and presentation made in the presence of John Thiellen age 45 years, occupation laborer living at Niederlosheim, first witness and of John Trochor age 34, occupation miller living at Neiderlosheim, second witness and have declaring it and the witnesses signed with us the present birth certificate after it has been read to them. Made at Losheim the said day, month and year.

The Mayor of Losheim

(Signature of Witnesses)



NO. 81 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

The year 1810, the eighteenth of the month of October at 1 o'clock in the afternoon, the Assistant coming to us performing the duties of the officer of the civil state in the townhall of Losheim, District of Nertzig, Department of Saar, has appeared John Hack age 22 years occupation of laborer living at Niederlosheim has presented us a female child born at Niederlosheim the seventeenth day of the month of October at five o'clock in the afternoon, born to him, John Hack occupation laborer living at Niederlosheim and his wife Janet Schneider and to which child he has declared to wish to give the name of Angelica, the said declaration and presentation made in the presence of Nicolas Veyand age 29 years occupation miller living at Nunkirch, first witness and of Muhel Muller age 33 years occupation laborer living at Losheim, second witness and have declaring it and the witnesses signed with us the present birth certificate after it has been read to them. Made at Losheim the said day, month, and year.

The Assistant of Losheim

/s/ J. Kortz

(Signature of witnesses)

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NO. 84 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

The year 1812, the tenth of the month of December at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the Mayor coming to us performing the duties of the officer of the civil state in the townhall of Losheim, District of Nertzig, Department of Saar, has appeared John Hack age 24 years occupation of laborer living at Niederlosheim who has presented us a female child born at Niederlosheim this day in the month of December at ten o'clock in the morning to John Hack occupation of laborer living at Niederlosheim and Janet Schneider his wife and to which child he has declared to wish to give the name, Elizabeth, the said declaration and presentation made in the presence of Francis Schneider age 28 years occupation of laborer living at Nunkirch first witness and of Theise Muller age 59 years occupation of laborer living at Losheim, second witness and have declaring it and the witnesses signed with us the present birth certificate after it has been read to them. Made at Losheim the said day, month, and year.

The Mayor of Losheim

(Witnesses)  
(Signatures)

\_\_\_\_\_



NO. 69 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

The year 1814, the nineteenth of the month of September at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, the Burgomeister coming to us performing the duties of the officer of the civil state in the townhall of Losheim, District of Nertzig, Department of Saar, has appeared John Hack age 26 years occupation of laborer living at Niederlosheim has presented to us a female child born at Niederlosheim the ninth day of the month of September at one o'clock in the morning to John Hack occupation of laborer living at Niederlosheim and Janet Schneider his wife and to which child he has declared to wish to give the name of Janet, the said declaration and presentation made in the presence of Adam Britz age 27 years occupation of schoolteacher living at Losheim, first witness and of John Scher age 33 years occupation of day worker living at Losheim, second witness and have declaring it and the witnesses signed with us the present birth certificate after it has been read to them. Made at Losheim the said day, month, and year.

The Burgomaster of Losheim

(Witnesses)  
(Signatures)

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NO. 57 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

Government District Trier

Merzig

In the year 1816 on the 28th of July at 9:00 A.M. Johannas Hack, 28 years of age, profession workman, living in Niederlosheim appeared before me, the Civil Register of Births of the Township Losheim, Merzig, District Birkenfeld, and showed me a child of male gender and declared that it was born in Niederlosheim on July 27, at 4 P.M. from the above named Johannas Hack, profession workman, living in Niederlosheim and his wife, Johanna Schneider and that the latter wanted to give this male child the name of Matthew Joseph Hack. After the mentioned showing of the child and its declaration in the presence of 2 witnesses, Mr. Claudius Klunn, 59 years old, profession of wool worker, living in Losheim and Mr. Johannas Kortz, 51 year old, profession of worker, living in Losheim, had taken place, I have written down all this in the presence of the parent of the child and of witnesses above in a double original way which was signed after reading (of the same) by the parent of the child, by the witnesses and by myself. So done in Losheim in the month, day, and year as above.

The Civil Register (signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Johannas Hack  
Claudius Klunn  
Johannas Kortz



NO. 68 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

In the year 1818 on the 16th of October at 11:00 A.M. Johannas Hack, 30 years of age, profession laborer, living at Niederlosheim appeared before me, the Civil Register of Births of the township Losheim, Merzig, District Birkenfeld, and showed me a child of female gender and declared that it was born in Niederlosheim on October 16, at 1 P.M. from the above named Johannas Hack, profession farm laborer, living at Niederlosheim and his wife Johannetta Schneider and that they wanted to give this female child the name Suzanne Hack. After the mentioned showing of the child and its declaration in the presence of 2 witnesses, Mr. Peter Meyers, 44 years old, profession farmer, living in Losheim and Mr. Peter Trumble, 65 years old, profession of joiner, living in Losheim, had taken place, I have written down all this in the presence of the parent of the child and of the witnesses above in a double original way which was signed after reading (of the same) by the parent of the child, by the witnesses and by myself. So done in Losheim in the month, day, and year as above.

The Civil Register (signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Johannas Hack  
Peter Meyers  
Peter Trumble

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NO. 83 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

In the year 1820 on the 24th of September at 2:00 PM Johannas Hack, 32 years of age, profession farmer, living in Neiderlosheim appeared before me, the Civil Register of Births of the township Losheim, District Merzig, and showed me a child of female gender and declared that it was born in Niederlosheim on September 20 at 9:00 A.M. from the above named Johannas Hack, profession farmer, living in Niederlosheim and his wife Johannetta Schneider and that they wanted to give this female child the name Catherine Hack. After the mentioned showing of the child and its declaration in the presence of 2 witnesses, Mr. Conrad Zenner, 30 years old, profession of tailor, living in Losheim, and Mr. Stephan Chielen, 34 years old, profession farmer, living in Losheim, had taken place, I have written down all this in the presence of the parent of the child and of the witnesses above in a double original way which was signed after reading (of the same) by the parent of the



child, by the witnesses and by myself. So done in Losheim in the month, day and year as above.

The Civil Register  
Frank

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Johannas Hack  
Conrad Zenner  
Stephan Cheilen

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NO. 133 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

In the year 1822 on the 18th of November at 1:00 P.M. Johannas Hack, 34 years of age, profession farmer, living at Niederlosheim appeared before me, the Civil Register of Births of the township Losheim, canton Wadern, District Merzig, and showed me a male child and declared that it was born in Niederlosheim on November 18, at 6:00 A.M. from the above named Johannas Hack, profession farmer, living in Niederlosheim and his wife Johannetta Schneider and that they wanted to give this male child the name Peter. After the mentioned showing of the child and its declaration in the presence of 2 witnesses, Mr. Peter Rass, 49 years old, profession of shoemaker, living in Losheim, and Mr. Joseph Rass, 22 year old, profession shoemaker, living in Losheim had taken place, I have written down all this in the presence of the parent of the child and of the 2 witnesses above in a double original way which was signed after reading (of the same) by the parent of the child, by the witnesses and by myself. So done in Losheim in the month, day and year as above.

The Civil Register

Frank

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Johannas Hack  
Peter Rass  
Joseph Rass

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NO. 40 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

March 19, 1825. Account of Birth of Joseph Hack born on March 18 at 8:00 P.M. the son of Johannas Hack, realestateman, 36 years old of Niederlosheim and frau Johannetta Schneider. The child was shown to me and recognized as a male. First witness, Matthew Minninger, tailor, 33 years of age. Second witness, Ludwig Mohn, of Losheim, fieldguard, 56 years old. We have on the



request made to us by Johannas Hack the father of the child signed this. Certified and read according to law by me, Matthew Schommer, Burgomaster of Losheim performing the duties of a Public Register. So done at Losheim in the month, day and year as above.

Civil Register  
Matthew Schommer

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#### NO. 115 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

December 13, 1826 at 11:00 A.M. Account of Birth of Mathius Hack, born on December 12 at 8:00 A.M., the son of Johannas Hack, farmer, 38 years old of Niederlosheim, and wife Johannetta Schneider. The child was shown to me and recognized as a male. First witness, Jacob Schommer, realestate owner, 52 years old. Second witness, Matthew Philipps 25 years old, school teacher, living in Niederlosheim. We have signed this act upon the request of Johannas Hack, the father of the child. Certified and read according to law by me, Matthew Schommer, Burgomaster of Losheim performing the duties of a Public Register. So done at Losheim in the month, day and year as above.

Civil Register  
Matthew Schommer

J.J. Schommer  
Matthew Philipps  
Johannas Hack

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#### NO. 93 CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

October 23, 1828 at 8:00 A.M., Account of Birth of Nicholas Hack, born on October 22 at 3:00 P.M., the son of Johannas Hack, farmer, 40 years old of Niederlosheim, and wife Jannetta. The child was shown to us and declared as a male. First witness, Jacob Schuster, 28 year old, Blacksmith of Losheim. Second witness, Fredrich Stephany, 28 years old, forester. Upon the request made to me by Johannas Hack, the father of the child, we have signed this account, certified and read according to law by me, Matthew Schommer, Burgomaster of Losheim performing the duties of a Public Register. So done at Losheim in the month, day and year as above.

Civil Register  
/s/ Matthew Schommer

/s/ Jacob Schuster  
/s/ Fredrich Stephany  
/s/ Johannas Hack



The Burgomaster and Register, Matthew Schommer testifies that the 11 here presented Accounts of Birth are quite identical with the originals.

/s/ Mathew Schommer  
Burgomaster  
Losheim, May 24, 1837

Fees: 26 groschen)  
7 pfennig ) (equivalent to \$1.06)

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION  
FOR USE UPON ARRIVAL IN AMERICA

I hereby offer this testimony (information) unsolicited (without being influenced) in the case of one John Hack, farmer, of the vicinity of Niederlosheim upon his emigration (departure) to North America.

The above mentioned has farmed for me (been my tenant) from 1832 until the present time, 1837. He is an experienced farmer, an honored, respected and peace-loving citizen, an outstanding, exemplary father of a family of 11 children and has reared his children in Christian faith and high ideals, and does not belong to that irresponsible class of people who seek (wish) an easy living in a new land, but rather one who hopes through the combined efforts (co-operative) of the entire family to establish a home and eventually to purchase a tract of land large enough to amply support himself and family.

Although we, his employer and his fellow citizens, advise him to make this move, it is with deep regret that we see him leave. Our best wishes accompany him and his family in their new venture and we implore those in authority in the new land to help him realize his wishes and to offer him and his family protection.

(signature undiscernable)

by translator

recorded May 22, 1837



The United States of America "To all to whom these Presents shall come greeting". Certificate No 14014. Whereas John Hawk of Lake County Indiana has deposited in the General Land Office of the United States, a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Winamac, Indiana, it appears that full payment has been made by the said John Hawk, according to the provisions of the act of Congress of the 24<sup>th</sup> day of April 1820, entitled "an act making further provisions for the sale of public lands" for, The North east quarter of the South West quarter of Section Thirty Three in Township Thirty five North of Range Nine West of the second Principal Meridian and the district of land subject to sale, at Winamac Indiana containing Forty acres, according to the official Plat of Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General, which said Tract has been purchased by the said John Hawk.

Now Know ye that the United States of America in accordance of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress in such case made and provided have given and granted, and by these Presents do give and grant, to the said John Hawk, and to his heirs the said Tract above described, To have and To hold, the same together with all the rights privileges immunities and appurtenances of, what ever nature, thereto, belonging unto the said John Hawk, and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony whereof I John Tyler President of the United States of America have caused these letters to be signed, and the seal of the General Land Office to be thereto affixed Given under my hand at the City of Washington, this First day of December in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty, and the independence of the United States the Sixty first.

L S.

By the President John Tyler.

By John Tyler, Jr Secy.

Recorded, Vol 28 Page 127.

R. M. Whitney

Recorder of the General Land

Signed by Recorder. 10 Dec.

5183  
B.  
R.  
L.D.

(4-205)

Department of the Interior.

General Land Office

Washington D.C. March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1895.

I R. W. Lawrence, Commissioner of the General Land Office do hereby certify that the annexed Copy of Patent in favor of John Hawk, founded on Winamac, Indiana Cash Entry No 14014, is a true and literal duplication from the record in this office.

In Testimony whereof I have hereunto subscribed, my name and caused the seal of this office to be affixed at the City of Washington on the day and year above written.



Commissioner of General Land Office.

Filed March 27<sup>th</sup> 1895 at 8 AM.

John Frost



## CHILDREN OF JOHN AND JOHANNA HACK

### Five daughters:

Sussanna--Married Vincent Sauter. Lived on a farm at Straausburg, Illinois. Had fifteen children.

Elizabeth--Married John Klassen and had seven children.

Johanna--Married Peter Thielen and had eight children.

Catherine--Married John Seberger. Lived on a farm five miles northeast of St. John. She died young after giving birth to seven children.

Angeline--Married Peter Gard. Homesteaded a mile north of Cedar Lake, and had ten children, seven sons and three daughters.

### Six Sons:

John II--Married Mary Scherer. Had four children and died young.

Mathias J.--Married Angeline Schmal, after death of Barbara Thiel, his first wife. Three children reached maturity. He was known as M.J.

Joseph--Married Catherine Leinen. Six children were born. He was in the wagon and buggy making business.

Mathias--Married Eve Heiser. Four of the eight children lived. Operated a saw mill with his brother Peter for a time. Moved to Iowa in 1865 and to Kansas in 1872. He farmed in Kansas until his death in 1891.

Peter--Married twice, first to Helen Classen and then to Verena Bury. Thirteen children were born, but four died very young. Operated a saw mill and charcoal kiln near Michigan City with his brother Mathias.

Nicholas--Went west and settled in California. He died there in 1905 at the age of 82. He married late in life and had three children.

On March 21, 1843, John Hack deeded a portion of his original homestead to the Bishop of Vincennes. This deed consisted of the land that the original church was built on and the family cemetery with the church.

On October 3, 1868, however, the Bishop of Fort Wayne deeded back to the heirs of John Hack about 7/100ths of an acre to be used exclusively by them as a family burial site. The family cemetery can easily be seen when you drive east on Joliet Street, on the south side of the street after you cross the first set of railroad tracks.





Hack Family Burial site along with original church site

Cemetery in the West half of  
Section 33, Township 35 North,  
Range 9 West of the 2nd P.M.,  
West of Monon Railroad and  
South of 101st Avenue.

LAST DEEDS  
OF RECORD:

Warranty Deed: John Hack, to Celestine Lahailandiere, Bishop of Vincennes, his heirs and assigns forever for the use of the Catholics of the German settlement of Lake County, Indiana, dated March 21, 1843 and recorded November 3, 1853 in Deed Record "H", page 38. (Conveys a certain lot described as 4 acres of land in Section 33, Township 35 North, Range 9 West of the 2nd P.M., whereon the Catholic Church is now erected and which said church is nearly in the center of said lot of 4 acres and embraces parts of the Northwest quarter and the Southwest quarter of said Section 33, Township 35 North, Range 9 West of the 2nd P.M., in Lake County, Indiana, containing 4 acres of land which is hereby conveyed).



Deed: John Henry Luers, Bishop of Fort Wayne, To Heirs of John Hack, deceased, dated October 3, 1868 and recorded July 2, 1871 in Deed Record 14, page 499.

"This certifies that I have this day donated to Joseph Hack of Crown Point and the descendants of John Hack Senior forever that portion from the grounds donated by the said John Hack for church purposes which is now fenced in in Section 33, Township 35 North, Range 9 West, containing about 7/100ths of an acre. The ground hereby donated is to be exclusively used by them for a place of burial. The fence, however, is to be set back on the North side to within 2 feet of the foot of graves of John Hack and his wife and as many feet of ground as will thus be taken from the lot on the North side they will receive in return on the South side of said lot."

#### THE EARLY SETTLERS

In 1838, the year following the arrival of the Hack family, a second group of German settlers arrived in the area that would become St. John. Four families made up the second group, Joseph Schmal, Peter Orte, Michael Adler and Mathias Reeder. These four families intended to travel along with the Hack family, but for some reason that will probably never be known, they decided to delay their departure from Germany for one year. All four families settled in the same general vicinity of the Hack property. The descendants of these good immigrants, became, in less than two generations, good, solid Americans.

#### JOSEPH SCHMAL

Joseph Schmal selected a homesite east of Route 41 and on the north side of what is now 93rd Street. A stone marker located at the bend of 93rd Street, at the southwest corner of the Lake Hills golf course, marks the site of the Schmal homesite. When the road was established past the Schmal homestead it was called Schmal Street. Sometime in the 1960's, the Lake County Commissioners changed the name to 93rd Street.

Schmal had quite a large family of sons and daughters. He was not a young man and never did become fully Americanized. One of Schmal's sons, Adam, became prominent in political life in Lake County, and held the position of County Treasurer for two terms. Another son, bearing his



father's name, Joseph, became a prominent farmer in Brunswick. One of his daughters married a son of John Hack. Mrs. Angelina Hack Schmal was active for many years in Crown Point, and was a much respected woman in the social affairs of that community.

#### AUGUST KOEHLE

August Koehle, who once operated the popular summer resort known as Spring Hill Grove, was also a native of Germany, where he was born on



*Vilmer Koehle's Saloon later sold to Posty  
taken in 1889* CROWN POINT.

Koehle's hotel and saloon was located on Thielen Street and was appropriately called the "Depot Hotel" as it was within walking distance of the railroad depot.



October 3, 1853. Arriving in the United States in 1871, he first found employment with a brewer in Chicago. Five year later, he left the Windy City to attend the nation's Centennial celebration in Philadelphia and did not return to Chicago. Instead, he settled in Crown Point and went to work for the Crown Brewing Company. His ability brought advancement, and he eventually became foreman of the plant. Koehle had a good business mind, and had a flair for the fancy things as attested by his business card which is pictured below.

**DEPOT HOTEL**  
*Wine and Beer Saloon, Cigars, Etc.,*  
**AUGUST KOEHLE, PROP'R.**  
*St John, Lake County, Indiana.*

.....  
 First-Class Accommodations for Travelers, Etc., at Reasonable  
 Rates. Give me a call when in St. John.



In 1880 he left the Crown Brewing Company and opened his own saloon in Crown Point. The venture lasted only six months, however, before he decided to move to St. John, where he erected a building and opened the



Depot Hotel and Saloon. He later sold this business to Peter Portz and established Spring Hill Grove summer resort. The resort was located where St. John VFW Post 717 is now located on 93rd Street. The resort, consisting of a large picnic grove and a dance pavilion, became a popular place to visit by people from Lake County, as well as residents of Chicago who would travel here by way of the Monon Railroad which stopped in St. John.



Koehle's Depot Hotel and Tavern after it was destroyed by fire in the mid-1960's

in the mid 1960's the old hotel, which had been abandoned for many years after being used as a private home and also an apartment building, caught fire one summer night and burned to the ground. It had become run



down and was an eyesore in the neighborhood, and many people in the town suspected some well-meaning resident of the neighborhood had deliberately put the torch to the building.

It was a spectacular fire and the flames were visible throughout the town. Having been there during the fire, it seemed to me that everyone in town was there and turned the entire affair into a festive occasion.

#### ANDREW KAMMER

Andrew Kammer, like Francis P. Keilman, was a native of Germany, and was born in the same town, Hesse-Darmstadt. Kammer, however, was eight years younger than Keilman, having been born on September 2, 1838. Coincidentally, both men were at one time school teachers in St. John Township, but while Keilman decided upon a mercantile career, Kammer pursued a more varied one.

He arrived in Baltimore with his parents in 1846 and remained there until 1860. During this time he finished his schooling and learned the tailor's trade. For the eight years subsequent to 1860, he engaged in his trade at Cumberland, Maryland, and then returned to Baltimore where he remained for one year.

After his arrival in St. John in 1869, he taught school during the winter months for the next six years. He then spent a decade as travelling representative for a Baltimore publication, the Catholic Volkseitung, and an additional eight years as a salesman for a liquor firm. In 1887, when he was 49 years of age, he was appointed postmaster in St. John and remained in this job for more than 17 years.

In 1860, he married Katherine Wagner, who had also emigrated from Germany as a youngster, and seven children resulted from the marriage. They were Elizabeth, Mary, Nicholas, Michael, Theodore, Andrew and Catherine.

#### JOSEPH STARK

Joseph Stark was an adventurer who took part in the Mexican War, prospected for gold in California and sailed around Cape Horn before



finally settling down on a farm in St. John Township.



*St. John Post Office & Saloon*

*Left - Andrew Kammer Postmaster  
 Nicholas Kammer  
 Bernhard Brecker  
 - Nicholas Brecker*

*Picture  
 Tak*

*1895*

Kammer's Post Office and Saloon in 1895 when he was the Postmaster. The building is still lived in and is located across the street from the town hall at the northeast corner of Thiel and 93rd Streets.

Born in Baden-Baden, Germany in 1825, he originally was given the name Joseph Huber. While he was yet a boy, Stark's mother died and his father remarried. He and his step-mother did not get along, however, so the boy went to live with an uncle, a baker, who promised to teach him the trade and ultimately leave him the business when the uncle died. The arrangement



did not work out. So Huber finally ran away and, after working as a miller to earn passage money, embarked from Bremerhaven for America.

The name change came about, however, after he arrived in Chicago in 1847 and decided to enlist in the army for the Mexican War. Although he made few acquaintances here at first, he had, however, managed to become friendly with a family named Stark. Fearing that he might not come back from the war, he asked the Starks to take care of his affairs should this happen. They readily agreed to do so. On his enlistment papers he named the Starks as his next of kin, and in addition assumed the name of Stark, instead of Huber. Later when veterans were offered homestead land as a reward for service, he had to file and prove the land under his army name. He never again used the name Huber.

His Mexican War experience over, and discharged from the service, Stark heard about the 1849 California gold rush. Sensing a possibility of making a fortune, he formed a partnership with two other men and after buying a covered wagon, a team of horses and supplies, the trio headed west.

The trip was uneventful until they reached the desert in Utah. There the horses died, so Stark and the others packed all the supplies they could on their shoulders and started out on foot to find the nearest civilization. Time passed and they ran short of food. For three days they lived on a small amount of beans which they cooked and recooked several times until their water ran out. Resigned to their plight and expecting death, they were miraculously saved by the appearance of another wagon party who sold them food and water at an exorbitant price.

Arriving finally in California, the partners staked out a promising claim and began working it. They found no gold and the partners eventually became discouraged. They decided to move on, leaving Stark to work the claim alone. Stark forgot to post proof of ownership at the site and shortly after his partners left, he was forced to make a short trip elsewhere. During his absence, the claim was jumped by five other men.

Undiscouraged, Stark found a new partner and together they staked a new claim. This time luck was with them, and when they decided to return east, they divided gold worth four thousand dollars between them. The return trip to New York was made by sailing vessel around Cape Horn. Fearful of being robbed, Stark carried his share of the gold in a money belt hidden



beneath his clothing.

Once again back in the midwest, he took up a government homestead in St. John Township, where he cleared 160 acres of covering timber and planted crops. To this homestead he brought his new wife in 1850, the former Mary A. Merrick. Later, he sent his brother, Anton, and sister, Afra, money to pay their passage from Germany to this country, and once they were here, assisted them financially in getting settled and accustomed to live in a new land.

As the years passed, eleven children were born to the Starks. They were Afra, John, Mary, Joseph, Frank, George, Michael, Mathilda, Peter and Frances. Joseph Stark's life, unfortunately, proved to be a relatively short one. He died in 1880 at the age of 55. His wife, however, lived to the age of 81 and died in 1913.

#### GEORGE F. GERLACH

One of seven children, Gerlach came to St. John with his family in 1857 from Harper's Ferry, Virginia. He had been born in Bavaria on January 24, 1841 and accompanied his father, Michael, and his mother, Agnes, to the United States in 1846. His father pursued his trade of carpenter in Harper's Ferry for eleven years before moving to Indiana. Gerlach attended St. Vincent's College in Pennsylvania prior to coming to St. John.

Starting in 1858, at the tender age of 17, he taught school in St. John and Hanover Township for three months of each year, for the next ten years. During the other nine months of the year he began his career as a highly respected businessman by clerking in the store of Henry and F.P. Keilman which was located in St. John.

In 1865, Gerlach formed a partnership with his employer, F.P. Keilman and the two operated a general merchandise store for the next twenty years until Gerlach withdrew from the partnership to open his own store. Active in local affairs, Gerlach at one time was a Justice of the Peace in St. John. A shrewd investor, he owned an estimated 900 acres of land in various parts of the county. A contemporary on one occasion offered this estimate of him.

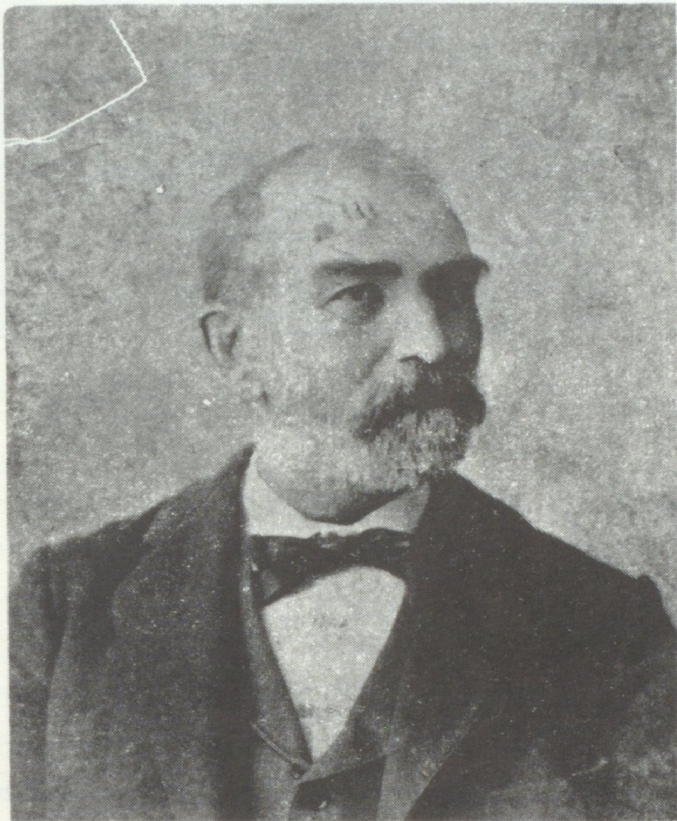
"He is and has been for some years an important factor in business



circles of St. John Township, and is always found identified with the side of progress and general advancement in material, social and educational movements."

Married in 1867 to Margaret Keilman, the couple had nine children. They were Katie, Frank, Joseph M., Maggie, Lizzie, George, Charles, Lena, and Clara. Upon reaching maturity, four of the boys were associated with their father in his business.

#### FRANCIS P. KEILMAN



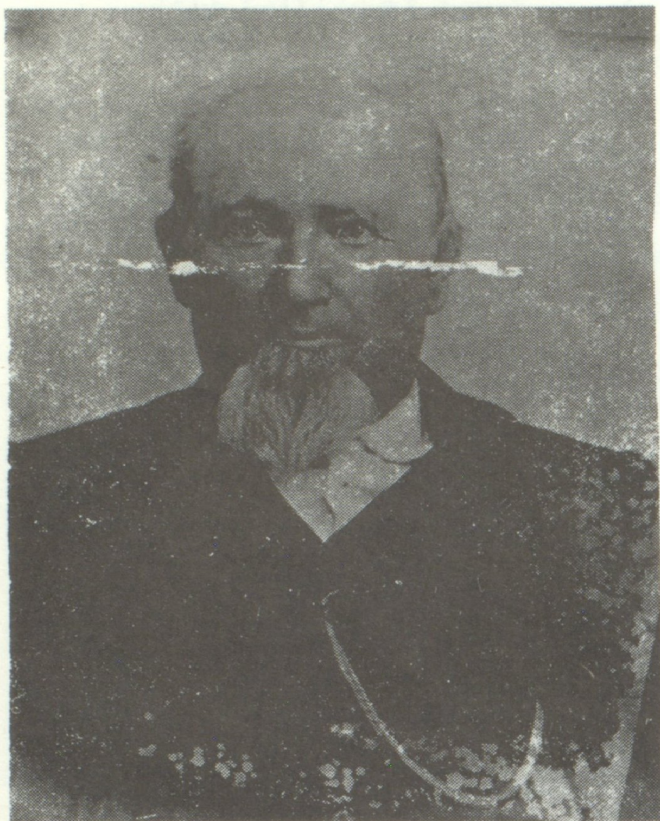
Francis P. Keilman, a pioneer St. John merchant, was born in Hess, Darmstadt, Germany, on November 25, 1831 and came to America with his parents in 1840.

His father, Henry, first settled in Portage County, Ohio, but in 1844, came to Lake County where he established a farm in St. John Township and continued to live there until his death at age 85. Keilman's mother died at the early age of 38 while the family still lived in Ohio. One of seven children, Francis left Ohio when he was eleven years old to live with his older brother, Henry, in Chicago. Here he attended school

until his parents moved to St. John Township, and he rejoined them there.

Two years later, however, in 1846, he returned to Chicago and clerked in a store where he first gained a grounding in shopkeeping. In 1859 he came back to St. John and clerked in a general merchandise store which his brother, Henry, had established. Some time later the brothers became partners in the business which then operated under the name of Henry and F.P. Keilman.





Henry Keilman, brother of Francis P. Keilman, and his third wife, Mary.

Named postmaster in 1856, he continued to hold this post until 1885. Married to Margaret Schaefer, also a native of Germany, in 1857, the couple in subsequent years had nine children. They were Susan, Francis B., John, William F., Elizabeth, Margaret, George, Lena and Peter.

After the Civil War in 1865, Keilman bought out his brother's interest in the store and formed a partnership with George F. Gerlach. This continued until 1885 when the partnership was dissolved. Gerlach withdrew to found his own store, and Keilman continued to operate the business alone. A contemporary described the store as having a fine general stock valued at ten thousand dollars.

At one time Kielmann had the reputation of being the longest established merchant in Lake County. A local historian once wrote of him:

"He and the family of which he is a member have been identified with Lake County and St. John since pioneer times, and their enterprises and personal influence have always been reckoned as important factors in the various affairs of the county."



A member of the Democratic Party, Keilman was active in civic affairs and at one time reportedly owned more than one thousand acres of land in the county.



on the left is the F.P. Keilman General Merchandise Store. The store on the right advertises "The cough cure, Jaynes Expectorant", Syracuse Plows, Weber Wagons and Rossow Wagons. Both stores were located across the street from the church, just south of the present intersection of 93rd Street and Route 41. At that time, Patterson Street, or it may even have been called Chicago Road or Joliet Street, ran past the church and entered Route 41 just north of the church cemetery.

#### LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF HENRY KEILMAN

I, Henry Keilman of St. John Township, being of sound mind and disposing memory do make, publish and declare this to be my last will and testament hereby revoking all former wills by me made

Item 1st: I give and bequeath unto my wife Mary Keilman, absolutely, all my personal property of every nature and description, including all credits, accounts, notes, moneys and other personal estate, out of which she shall pay and satisfy all my debts, funeral expenses, and the expenses of settling my estate, and shall pay the legacies given in Item 3rd of this will.

Item 2nd: I also give and devise unto my said wife Mary Keilman, for and during the term of her natural life, my



homestead, in St. Johns Township, in Lake County, Indiana, upon which I now reside, together with the land consisting of about fifty-two acres, upon which said homestead is situated, being the land bought by me of Nicholas Hack, and being part of the S.1/2 of the S.E.1/4 of Section 29, Township 35, Range 9, in said county.

And upon the death of my said wife the said homestead together with the said land shall go, and is hereby devised in fee to my children by my said wife Mary.

Item 3rd: I give and bequeath unto my children, by my first wife the sum of Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00) each, and to the children of my deceased daughter Catherine Austgen, together the sum of Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00) the legacies in this item shall be paid by my wife as specified in Item 1st above, and I give unto the children by my first wife and the children of said Catherine no more than is mentioned in this Item, because I consider that they and each and all of them have heretofore already received from me in money and property all that they and each of them are entitled to.

Item 4th: I give and devise unto my children by my present wife Mary Keilman, in fee simple forever, all my real estate, wherever the same be located or situated, not embracing however, the real estate specifically devised in Item 2nd above.

Item 5th: It is my will and I ordain that my children by my first wife and their issue, shall take no part of, nor interest in my estate, either real or personal, except the legacies given them in Item 3rd above.

Item 6th: The provision made in this will in favor of my said wife, shall be in lieu of all interest and share which she takes as widow under the law or which she would take in case I died without a will.

Item 7th: I appoint my wife and John A. Kimmet, Executor of this will, and also appoint them Guardians of my minor children, and request that the bond required of my said wife as such Executrix be only nominal, and that no surety be required thereon.

And I hereunto set my hand and seal this October 17th, 1895.

/s/ Henry Keilman (Seal)

Signed, sealed and acknowledged by the said testator Henry Keilman, as his last Will and Testament, in our presence, and we in his presence, and in presence of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses this October 17th, 1895.

/s/ W. B. Blackstone

Witnesses

/s/ Julius W. Youche



## PROBATE OF WILL OF HENRY KEILMAN

The foregoing last Will and Testament of Henry Keilman, deceased was duly probated in the Circuit Court of Lake County, Indiana, on the 20th day of July, 1896, upon the sworn testimony of W.B. Blackstone and Julius W. Youche, the subscribing witnesses thereto, and duly recorded same day in

Will Record "D", page 184 et seq.



A photograph of the Francis P. Keilman family. Back row from the left: Margaret, John, William, Elizabeth and Lena. Middle row from the left: Susan, Margaret (wife of Francis Keilman), Francis P. Keilman, and Frank, Jr. Sitting from the left: Pete and George.

## JOHN M. THIEL

As St. John's "village blacksmith" for more than forty-seven years, John M. Thiel earned the esteem of his fellow citizens and at the age of 73 still was active in his trade. The son of John and Mary Klassen Thiel, he was born in Prussia on May 15, 1832 and came to America with his parents in 1842. The family settled on a farm located 1 and 1/2 miles from St. John.

After a period of schooling, Thiel, at age 20, apprenticed himself to a blacksmith in Crown Point and spent two years there learning the trade.



After that he worked as a blacksmith in Crown Point for an additional three years. In 1857, he returned to St. John and opened his own blacksmith shop. This same year he married Susan Davis, who had been born in the same Prussian province and had come to the United States two years before him.



John M. Thiel's blacksmith shop was located just north of 93rd Street on Patterson, which was probably known as either St. John Road or Chicago Road at that time. Pictured from left: Standing alone is Peter Stark, Eberhard Thiel between the two horses, John "the Village Blacksmith" Thiel, and Casper Thiel.

The Thiels had seven children: Jacob, George, Eberhard, Joe, Frances, Clara and Thresia. Five other children did not survive to adulthood. The following extracts are translated from the Baptismal Register of the children of John Thiel. These are followed by photographs of the original German documents.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BAPTISMAL REGISTER OF THE CATHOLIC  
PARISH OF LOSHEIM, DIOCESE OF TRIER

No. 150-- On the 24th of November, 1822, born and baptized, Barbara, legitimate daughter of John Thiel and Mary Glaser, wedded in Niederlosheim. Godfather, Jacob Thiel



and Godmother Barbara Glaser of Niederlosheim.

J. Kipp  
Pastor

No. 22--- On the 29th of January, 1825, born and baptized, John, legitimate son of John Thiel and Mary Glaser, wedded of Niederlosheim. Godparents John Glaser and Mary Thiel both of Niederlosheim.

J. Kipp  
Pastor

No. 24--- On the 11th of February, 1827, born and baptized, Mathias, legitimate son of John Thiel and Mary Glaser, wedded of Niederlosheim. Godparents Mathias Graser and Susan Meiers both of Niederlosheim.

J. Kipp  
Pastor

No. 50--- On the 20th of June 1828, born and reborn, Mary, legitimate daughter of John Thiel and Mary Glaser, wedded of Niederlosheim. Godparents John Weil and Mary Thiel, both of Niederlosheim

J. Kipp  
Pastor

No. 38--- On the 2nd of April, 1830, born and the next day reborn, Nicholas, legitimate son of Jon Thiel and Mary Glaser, wedded of Niederlosheim. Godparents, Nicholas Buksr of Nuckirchen and Anna Boden of Niderlosheim

J. Kipp  
Pastor

No. 44--- On the 15th day of May, 1832, born and baptized, John, legitimate son of John Thiel and Mary Glaser, wedded on Niederlosheim. Godparents Joseph Johann and Margaret Wagener of Nieiderlosheim.

J. Kipp  
Pastor

No. 64--- On the 16th day of May, 1834, born and the next day reborn, Jacob Joseph, legitimate son of John Thiel and Mary Glaser. wedded of Niederlosheim. Godparents Jacob Thiel of Niederlosheim.

J. Kipp  
Pastor



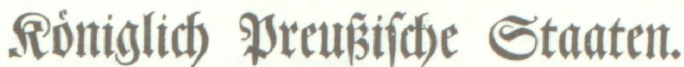
No. 72--- On the 22nd day of May, 1842, born and the next day baptized, Mary, legitimate daughter of John Thiel and Mary Glaser, wedded of Niederlosheim. Godparents Michael Rassier of Niederlosheim and Mary Buksr of Nuckirchen.

J. Kipp  
Pastor



Photo is of the John Thiel family. Back row, 3rd from the left: Eberhard; 5th from left is Casper Thiel. Front row on the left is Theresa (Neibling); 3rd from left is John Thiel's wife Susan, and then John Thiel. Others in the photo remain unidentified.





No 170

des Paß-Journals.

### Signalement :

de: Paß = Inhaber .

1. Religion *Evangelisch*
2. Alter *40 Jahre*
3. Größe *5 Fuß 4 Zoll*
4. Haare *schwarz*
5. Stirne *gerade*
6. Augenbraunen *schwarz*
7. Augen *grün*
8. Nase *gerade*
9. Mund *klein*
10. Bart *schwarz*
11. Kinn *gerade*
12. Gesicht *langlich*
13. Gesichtsfarbe *gelblich*
14. Statur *stark*
15. Besondere Kennzeichen *keine*

Unterschrift des Paß-Inhabers

Stempel und Gebühren:

- |                   |     |         |
|-------------------|-----|---------|
| 1) Stempel .....  | — 3 | Egr.    |
| 2) Gebühren ..... | 10  | Egr.    |
| Zusammen ..       |     | 15 Egr. |

Reise-Paß *nach Rußland*  
gültig auf *die Reise*

Darüber hinaus Thiel

gebürtig aus *Niederlasheim*  
wohnhaft in *Niederlasheim*  
mit *Johann Joseph Maria Platen* 25 geboren und  
*Hanna Josefine Dintzen* von 19, 17, 13, 11, 10 - 7 Jahren  
im *Kaufmannshaus zu Trossenhausen*  
von *Niederlasheim* über *Frankfurt*

nach ~~Canton~~  
reiset und durch ein Zungliff ist 6 Meilen lang gemacht.

als unverdächtig legitimirt ist, so ist d. *non saltem* der gegenwärtige Paß  
ertheilt, und werden als Civil- und Militair-Behörden *Si nullo*  
*modo* d. *saltem* mit angeführter Begleitung frei und  
ungehindert reisen und zurückreisen, auch nöthigenfalls ih. Schutz und  
Beistand angedeihen zu lassen.

Dieser Paß muß aber von der Polizei-Obrigkeit eines jeden Orts, an welchem der Zinkaber — sich länger als Vier und zwanzig Stunden aufhält, ohne Unterschied zwischen Stadt und Dorf, visirt und ihr deshalb vorgezeigt werden.

Begeben, *1. Mai 1842*  
*1. ungel. Kautschuk, 1. ungel. Kautschuk, 1. ungel. Kautschuk*  
*2. Zinn.*





# Extractus

registro baptismali parochiae catholicae  
Loshum

Dioecesis trevirensis

- N<sup>o</sup> 50. 1822, vigesima quarta Novembris natus et baptizatus  
Barbara Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen  
conjugum in Niederlosheim filia legitima levantibus  
ambo Thiel & Barbara Glasen ambo de Niederlosheim.  
(sig.) J. Kipp. parochus.
- N<sup>o</sup> 51. 1825, vigesima nona Januarii natus et altera renatus est  
Joannes Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen conj. & Niederlosheim  
filius leg. levantibus Joannes Glasen & Maria Thiel, ambo  
de Niederlosheim. (sig.) id supra.
- N<sup>o</sup> 52. 1827, undecima Februarii natus & baptizatus est Mathias  
Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen conj. & Niederlosheim  
filius leg. levantibus Mathias Glasen & Maria Thiel, ambo  
de Niederlosheim. (sig.) idem.
- N<sup>o</sup> 53. 1828, vigesima Tertia nota et renata est Maria Joannis Thiel de  
Niederlosheim levantibus Joannes Thiel & Maria Thiel ambo de Niederlosheim.
- N<sup>o</sup> 54. 1829, decima octava Octobris natus et renatus est Joannes  
Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen conj. & Niederlosheim  
filius leg. levantibus Joannes Glasen & Maria Thiel, ambo  
de Niederlosheim.
- N<sup>o</sup> 38. 1830, secunda Aprilis natus et altera renatus est Nicolaus  
Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen conj. & Niederlosheim  
filius leg. levantibus Nicolaus Becker de Nunkirchen  
& Anna Boden de Niederlosheim.
- N<sup>o</sup> 44. 1832, decima quinta Maji natus et renatus est Joannes  
Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen conj. & Niederlosheim  
filius leg. levantibus Joannes Glasen & Maria Thiel, ambo  
de Niederlosheim.
- N<sup>o</sup> 64. 1834, decima sexta Maji natus et altera baptizatus est Jacobus  
Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen conj. & Niederlosheim  
filius leg. levantibus Jacobo Thiel de Niederlosheim.
- N<sup>o</sup> 72. 1842, vigesima secunda Maji nata et altera renata est Maria  
Joannis Thiel & Mariae Glasen conj. in Niederlosheim filia leg.  
levantibus Michael Praeger de Niederlosheim & Maria Becker  
de Nunkirchen.

Loshum, 23<sup>ta</sup> Janii 1842.

In fidem

J. Kipp  
Definitor



Quoy qu'il soit en l'absence d'un tel, l'administration  
 de l'Etat, et son Comptable, ont le droit de l'Etat  
 et de 1850, l'administration de l'Etat.

N. 776.

Moritz, le 7<sup>me</sup> Mai 1842

de l'Administration, et l'Administration

de l'Administration, et l'Administration

M. H. H.

110 478, ou de l'Administration de l'Etat  
 l'Administration de l'Etat

l'Administration de l'Etat

l'Administration de l'Etat

Je vous prie de l'Administration

l'Administration de l'Etat

l'Administration de l'Etat

l'Administration de l'Etat

l'Administration de l'Etat

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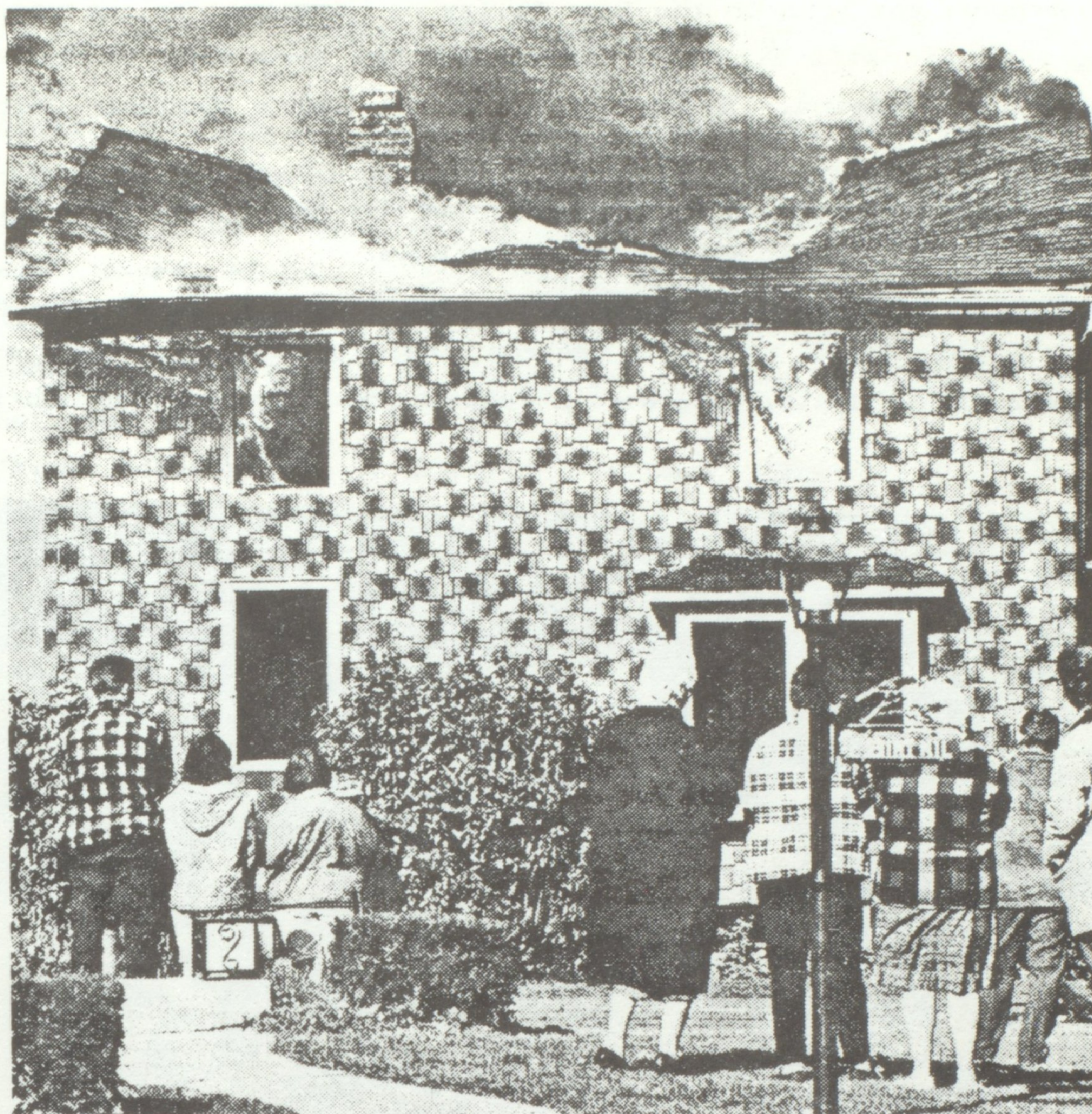
l'Administration de l'Etat





John Thiel home located north of Pierce Iron Works on Patterson Street. The site is an empty lot now, adjacent to Jim Thiel's home. This home was built in 1843. Pictured here are from left: daughter, Theresa, John Thiel, Susan, Eberhard and Casper Thiel. Youngsters in front are unidentified.





Spectators watch the John Thiel home burn to the ground in November, 1965. At that time the home was 123 years old, and was the oldest home in St. John. (Another photo of the home is on the preceeding page.) Jim Thiel, the owner of the home, had the St. John Volunteer Fire Department burn the old home. Jim and his mother, Mary Thiel, stood by and watched the flames consume the home while many fond memories went through their minds.



### JACOB SCHERER

Jacob Scherer was born in the Saar Valley of Germany. In the year 1846 he, along with his wife Elizabeth Spahn, who had been born in Prussia in 1816, sailed for America. A son Jacob, age 6, and a daughter Catherine were with them.

During the voyage a third child, Mary Anne was born. The date of birth is listed as July 17, 1846, on the Atlantic Ocean.

They finally arrived in St. John that same year, but Jacob, Sr. passed away shortly thereafter. Family records indicate 1846 or 1847 as the probable year of his death. His wife Elizabeth then married John Gehring



Jacob Scherer with his wife and two daughters, Minnie and Laura in front of the family home at 9520 Joliet Street. The home was built prior to 1880 and is still occupied by Myrtle and Bernard Thiel, descendants of Jacob Scherer.



on March 14, 1848. By this marriage there were three daughters, Elizabeth, Angela and Helena. Daughter Elizabeth passed away when only 16 months of age.

Jacob, Jr. was a carpenter and also farmed 60 acres of land. He married Catherine Portz on May 5, 1868. She was born on December 3, 1848 in St. John. The couple had seven children, Albert, Edward, Wilhelmina (Minnie), Laura, Adolph, Alfred (Fred), and August.

The family home is located on Joliet Street and is still occupied by descendants of Jacob Scherer, Myrtle and Bernard. Bernard Thiel operates a cabinet shop there.

Jacob Scherer had a brother Nicholas, born in 1830 on June 29. Nicholas was the founder of Schererville, Indiana, just north of St. John. He died in 1907.



The Portz family picture. Back row left to right: John, Peter, Joe, and Leo. Front row left to right: sisters, Elizabeth and Barbara, mother, Susan, Katherine and Susan.

#### JOHN THIEL

John Thiel, the grandfather of Dan Thiel, was born in Germany. The family has no record as to the date he came to St. John. Thiel was a farmer, as were most of the German settlers in St. John.



On December 14, 1871, a son, Peter was born. Peter Thiel was the father of Dan Thiel, long time employee of the Town of St. John.

Peter learned to be a barber, and eventually built his home on the corner of Route 41 and 93rd Street, where Security Federal Savings and Loan is now located, in the early 1900's. Thiel raised his family in this building and also operated his barbering business there. However, there was another business that he ran from his home.

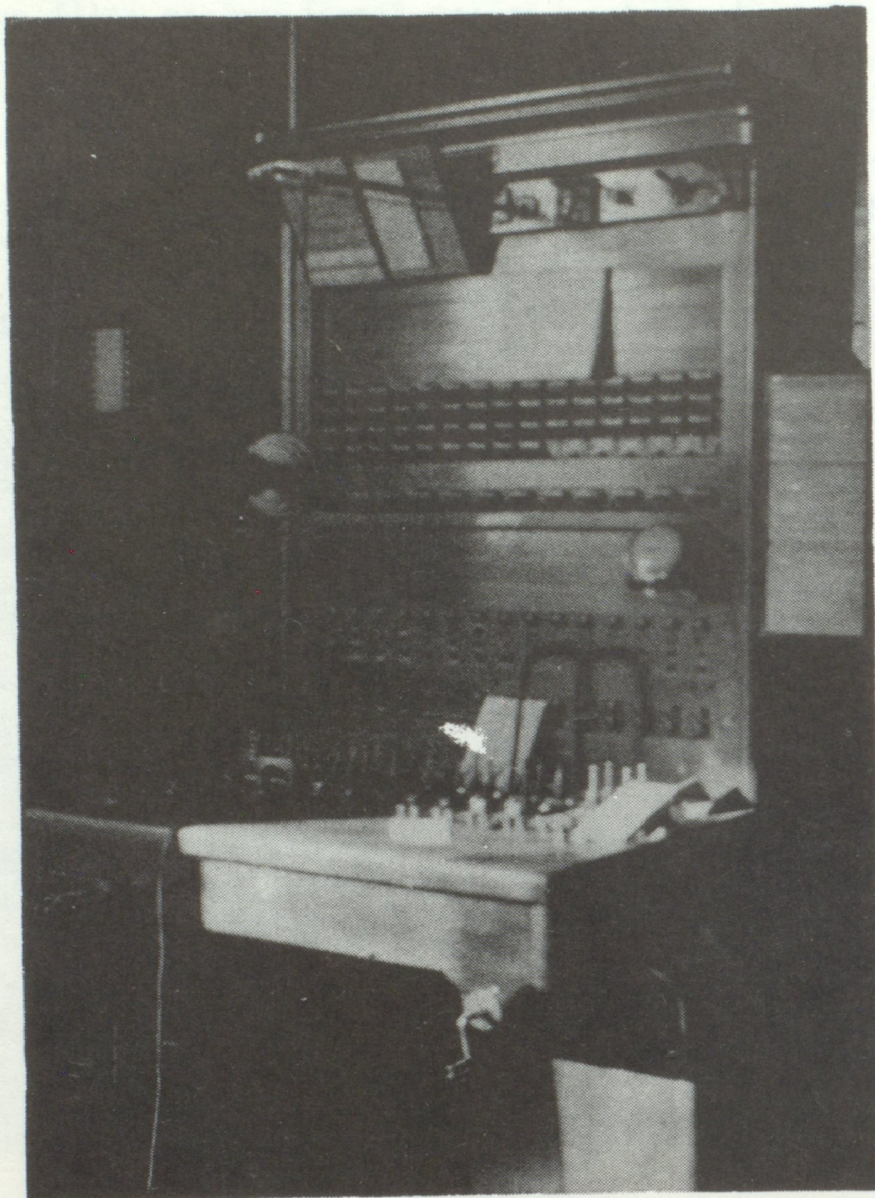


Photo of the Northwestern Switchboard located in the Peter Thiel home located on the southeast corner of 93rd Street and Route 41



On August 12, 1912, The St. John Town Board granted a franchise to Northwestern Telephone Company to install telephones in St. John, and the switchboard was installed in the Peter Thiel home.

In 1914 Illinois Bell Telephone Company bought out the Northwestern system, but left the switchboard to be operated by the Thiel family out of their home.

All of the phone lines were 12 party lines, and probably everyone in town knew what was going on with each family by just picking up the receiver. Back in those early days there might not have been too much telephone traffic in St. John.

but can you visualize a 12-party telephone line as being anything more than a hopeless situation in 1987?



The Peter Thiel home at the corner of 93rd Street and Route 41 in 1920. Note the Illinois Bell emblem on the door. The building to the left is Hohn Miller's tavern and hotel. The street between the two buildings is 93rd Street and the street in front of the Thiel home is a major thoroughfare, U.S. Route 41, barely a 2-lane road at that time.



## THE JOSEPH GERLACH FAMILY

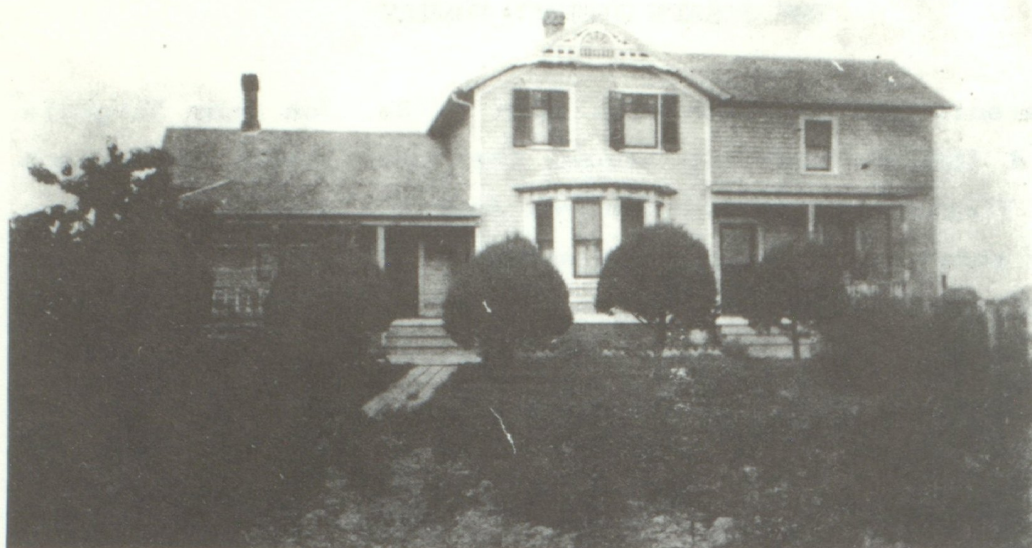
The parents of Joseph Gerlach came to St. Joh from Virginia in the mid 1800's, possibly around the time George F. Gerlach came from Virginia in 1857. The two families were related, but the family today does not know for sure what the relationship was.

In 1895, Gerlach married Susan Schumacher, and they built a home in 1905. The home still stands, just to the west of the St. John Post Office. Not long after that, Joseph Gerlach opened a Saw Mill and Feed Store on the site that is now occupied by the St. John Post Office. The date that this business was disbanded is not known.



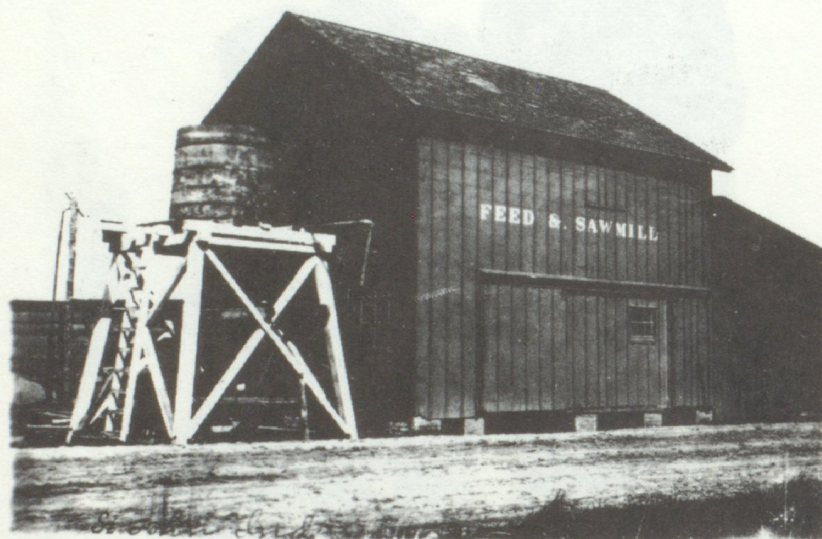
1895 Wedding picture of Joseph Gerlach and Susan Schumacher





Pictured above is the Joseph Gerlach home, built in 1905 just to the west of St. John's Post Office on Joliet Street.

Pictured below is Joseph Gerlach's Feed Store and Saw Mill. The Post Office on Joliet Street now occupies this site.

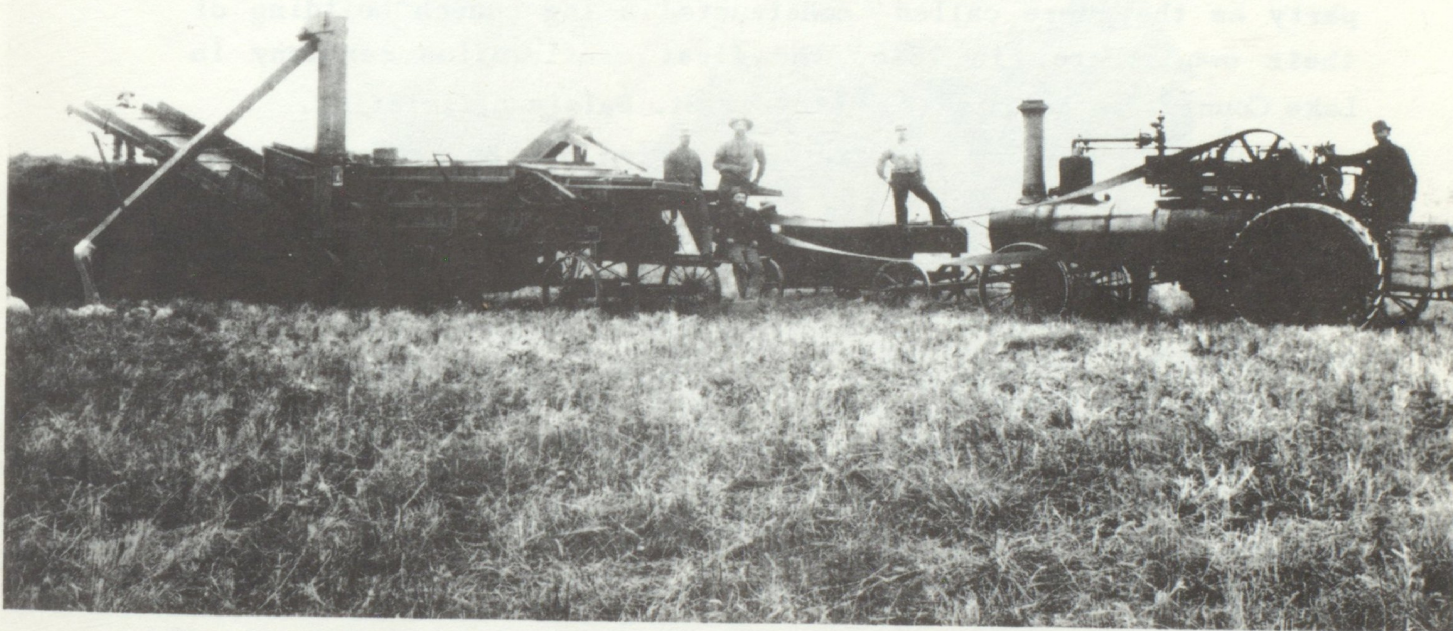






Pictured above: Logs waiting to be cut at Gerlach's Saw Mill. Note the family home in the rear.

Pictured below: St. John farmers, all unidentified, using steam powered equipment shortly after the turn of the century





## THE EARLY YEARS

The formation of the tiny community began to slowly take shape as more people arrived from Germany and settled here. Hack, a religious man, realized that a church was urgently needed to meet the spiritual yearnings of the people. Until this time, Father Fisher, of Chicago, had come to the community twice a month and celebrated mass in Hack's home.

Thus it was that a rude frame church building was erected by Hack on his property. Materials for its construction were donated by Bishop de St. Palais, and everything was hauled from Chicago by teams of oxen. Each trip required one week. No record remains as to how many trips were made. The new structure was the first Catholic church in Lake County and became known as the "mother church" of all other churches of the denomination in the county.

Scarcely had this church been built, however, than a schism occurred in the congregation, some of the members siding with Hack, but the majority, consisting of some eighteen families, siding with the priest. The dissident group began meeting in the home of John Thiel. Somewhat later these dissidents, or loyal party as they were called constructed a log church building of their own. Here, in 1846, the first confirmation ceremony in Lake County was held, with Bishop de St. Palais officiating.

This historic log church, now located on the present church grounds and facing Route 41, had been designated as the first Catholic church in the county. However, some history buffs say that the log church is the one built by Hack on his property, and not a frame church as church records state. They further feel that the frame church was built by the dissident group. No one can say for certainty which was built first. I feel that church records must prevail here, and one must assume they are correct. Therefore, the log church became the second Catholic church in St. John, not the first.

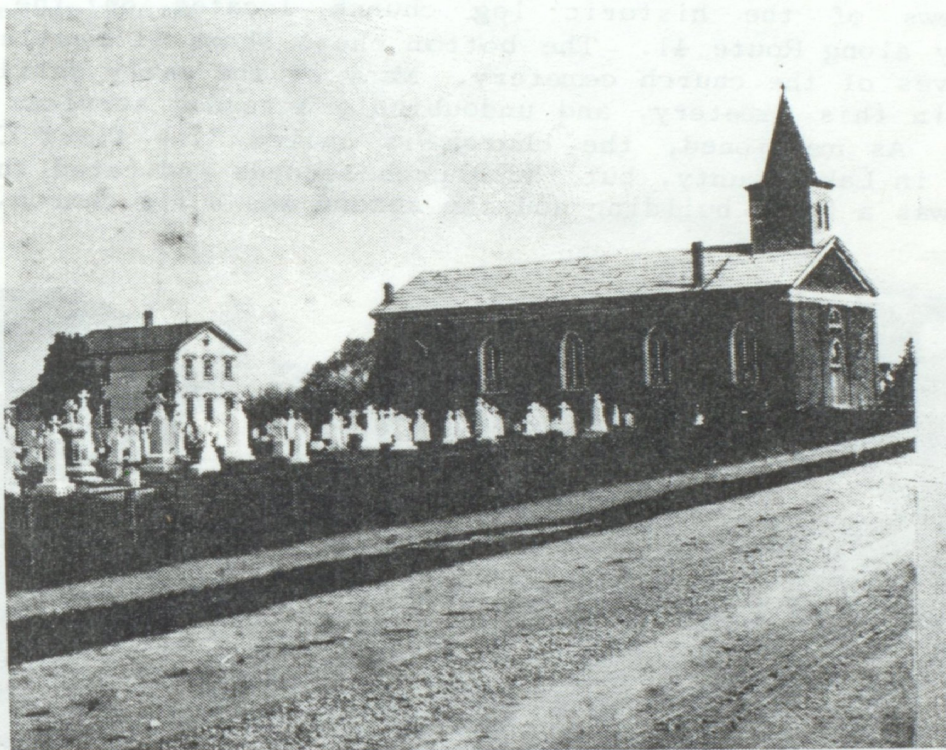
In 1846 it became apparent that this community would continue to grow with the arrival of more and more people. Consequently, residents petitioned the United States government for a post office to be located here. A name for the community had to be agreed upon, and residents at a public meeting decided upon the name of St John's. Contrary to the belief - see tipped -44- in page 38-39 from first edition 1981. (45-46)



of many who moved here in later years, the town was not named after the church, but after its first settler, John Hack. The prefix "St." was added to Hack's name, not because his friends and admirers wished to canonize him, but simply for euphony.

An early historian explained that the "s" was added to John, so that Hack furnished four letters in the town name and other residents three. Thus Hack was honored by having a majority of one. When the town was laid out into lots in 1881 the "s" continued to appear, but was dropped when the town was incorporated in 1911.

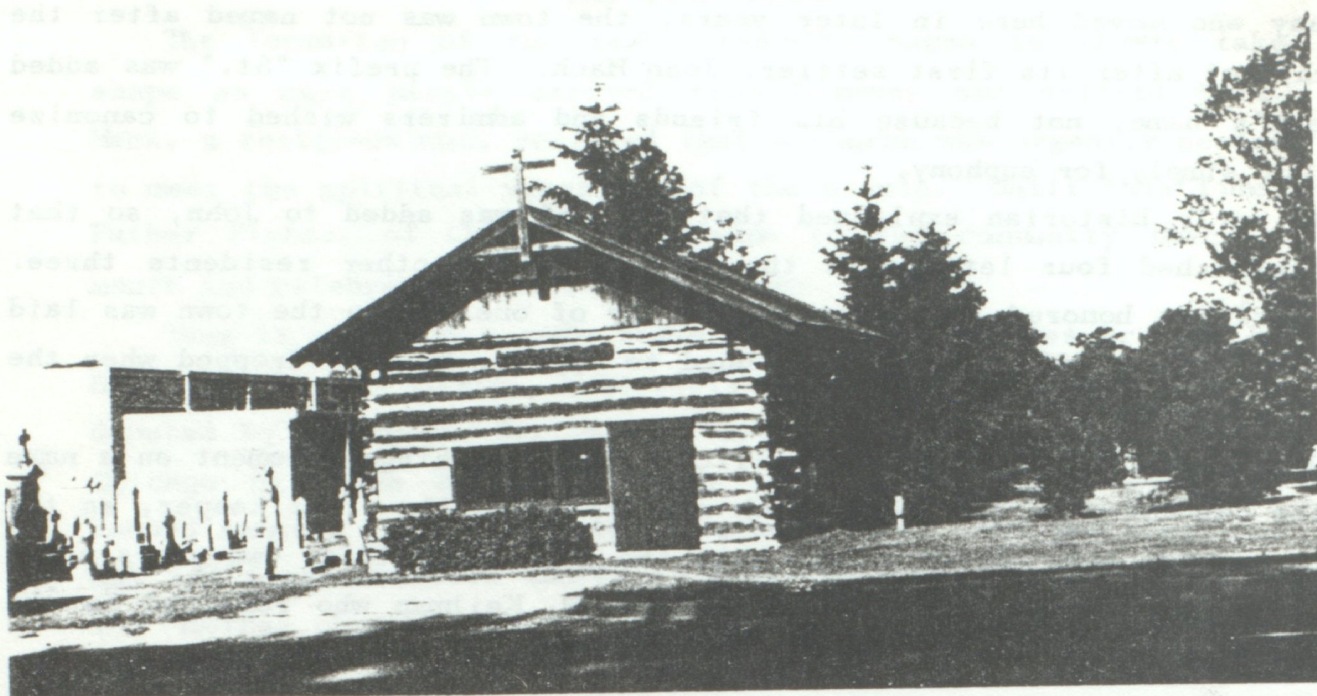
Upon establishment of a post office, after reaching agreement on a name for the community in 1846, John Hack was appointed its first keeper, as the postmaster was then called. Hack held the post until 1854, two years prior to his death. He was succeeded by Francis P. Keilman who remained on the job for 27 years.



Photograph of the brick church constructed in 1856

In 1856, during the pastorate of Father Force, a new brick Catholic church was constructed. This building measured 90-by-52 feet, stood 25 feet high, and cost an estimated seven to eight thousand dollars.





Two views of the historic log church located on the church property along Route 41. The bottom photo shows it nestled among the graves of the church cemetery. Many of the early settlers are buried in this cemetery, and undoubtedly attended services in the church. As mentioned, the church is called "the first Catholic Church" in Lake County, but the church records indicated the first church was a frame building and the second was a log church.





Meanwhile, the church had been active in educational matters. In 1846, it sponsored and erected the first school in the township, with Sister Frances from Notre Dame as the teacher. There were one hundred and nine pupils.

Prior to the arrival of the railroad in St. John during the year 1881, this community depended largely on its own resources for sustenance. The earliest trades and businesses were agricultural. The plowing was done with oxen, and according to some historians the first settlers used plows made of hedge limbs. Pioneer settlers delivered wheat to Chicago in oxen driven wagons.

The railroad, Louisville, New Albany and Chicago, created an outlet for milk and dairy products produced by the many dairy farmers in the area. The milk was shipped to Chicago in the baggage cars of the trains. The story has been told about the passengers on the trains complaining about the long delay in St. John while the milk containers were loaded. On the return trip it was the same story, a long delay in St. John while the empty containers were unloaded



Bernard Scheidt's Hotel and Sample Room.



The Bernard Scheidt homestead was located on the northeast corner of what is now Route 41 and 93rd Street. The business also served as a stage stop for people going from Crown Point to the northwest portion of the county and to Chicago. Scheidt's son-in-law, John Miller, Jr., purchased the wooden structure around 1900 and constructed a brick hotel, tavern, and adjacent garage.



Bar at John Miller's tavern and hotel after he purchased it from his father-in-law, Bernard Scheidt

Other businesses located in the same vicinity along Route 41 were a farm equipment store and a general merchandise store, as well as John Thiel's blacksmith shop located almost directly across the street from the tavern and hotel. (Pictures of these businesses appeared on previous pages) A saw mill owned by the Joseph Gerlach family was located at the site of the present St. John Post Office on Joliet Street. Local farmers brought timber from their property for custom sawing. At the junction of Thielen and Hack Streets the Gerlach brothers had a slaughter house. It was adjacent to the Louisville, New Albany and Chicago Railroad tracks, which made it convenient to ship livestock as well as slaughtered beef. One of the largest creameries in the area was located on the south side of



93rd Street near its intersection with Keilman Street. The creamery shipped great quantities of dairy products, as well as farm produce from the many farms surrounding the town. Operated by several owners, the creamery was totally demolished by fire on January 18, 1915 and was never rebuilt, although its foundations remained until the 1960's.

On December 17, 1881, Peter Thielen, a son-in-law of John Hack, recorded the official plat of the town. For some unknown reason the plat, as it was recorded, did not include any of Hack's property, the present site of the Catholic church, or any of the businesses located in the vicinity of what is now Route 41 and 93rd Street.



Peter Thielen



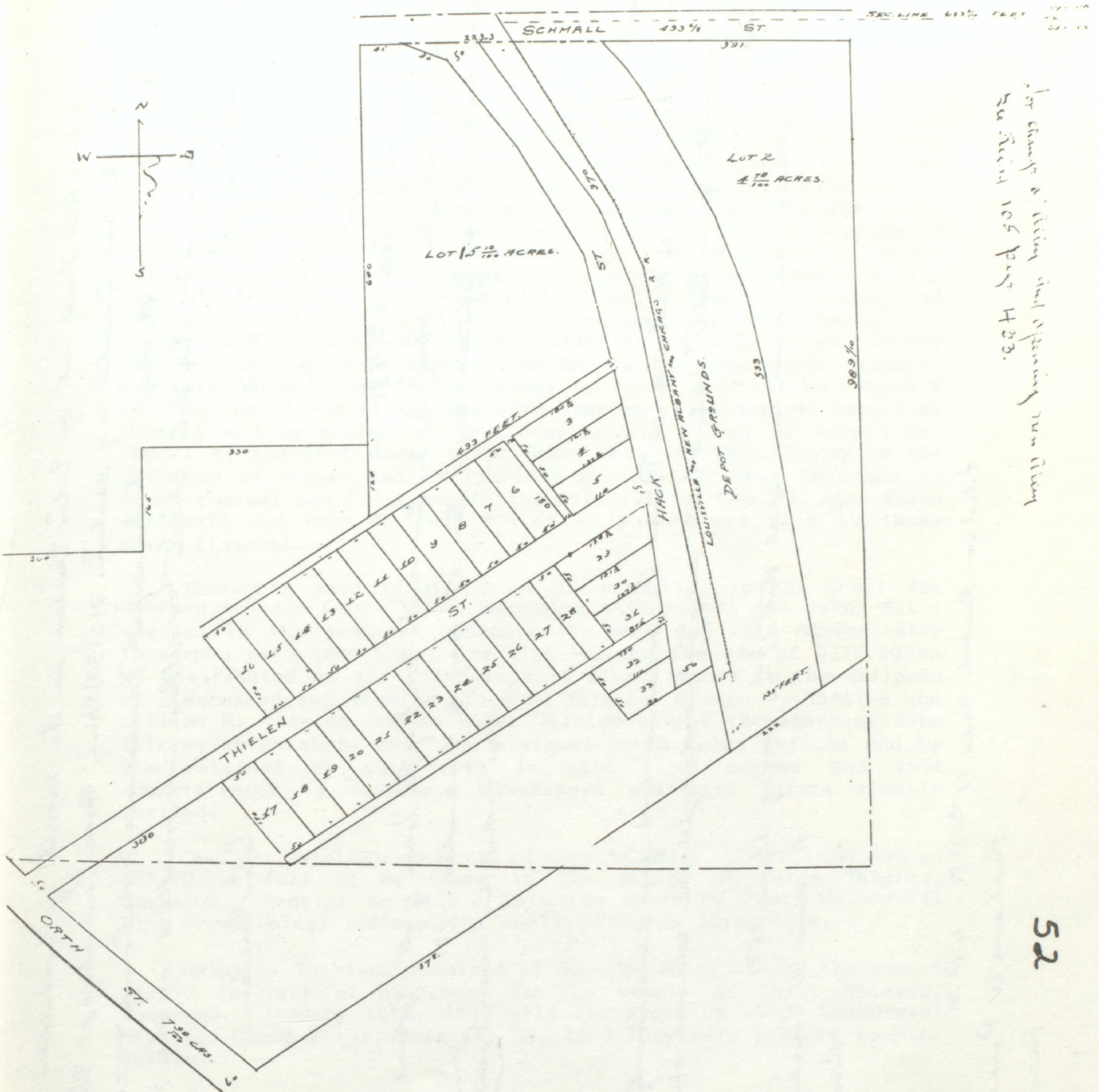
The recorded plat showed the area divided into thirty-three lots of various sizes. Four streets were also included: Orth (Joliet), Schmal (93rd), Hack and Thielen. Also shown was the depot grounds of the Louisville, New Albany and Chicago Railroad, the location of Schmal's blacksmith shop and the site of August Koehle's Depot Hotel and Tavern.



Johanna Thielen, daughter of John Hack, wife of Peter Thielen



# TOWN OF ST. JOHNS.



For change of title and opening new lines  
See Survey 105 page 423.



The Town of St. John was laid out by Peter Thuelen in the month of November 1881 on a part of the North West Quarter 14 of section 22 (33) Thirtieth Township 12 North 135th North Range 19 West 2nd Principal Meridian Lake County State of Indiana. The dimensions of the lots blocks and alleys are marked on the map in feet and decimals of a foot.

Peter Thuelen.

Office of County Surveyor  
Crown Point Dec 10<sup>th</sup> 1881

I do hereby Certify that the above is a correct map of the Town of St. John  
Witness my hand and Office seal this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December 1881

John Fisher Co. v. Paul

-52-

State of Indiana } ss  
Lake County

Before me Richard W Price Recorder in and for said County  
and State Personally Came Peter Thuelen and duly acknowledged the execution of the  
aforesaid Plat

Witness my hand and seal this 17<sup>th</sup> day of Dec. 1881

Richard W Price  
Recorder

Filed for Record Dec 17<sup>th</sup> 1881 - 4 PM

Richard W Price  
Recorder



SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE OF PETER THIELEN

On page 408 of Record of Administrator's Bond, Oath and Letters No. 1 it appears that on August 5, 1897, Nicholas Thielen was appointed Administrator of Estate of Peter Thielen and gave bond in sum of \$100.00.

Lake Circuit Court, Estate No. 866.

October 5th, 1898: Comes now the Administrator Nicholas Thielen and shows to the court that he filed his final report herein on the 13th day of August, 1898, which report is in these words (insert), and the same was set for hearing on the 3rd day of October, 1898, and said Administrator further shows to the Court that due and legal notice was given of the filing and hearing of said final report by publication of notice for two weeks successively in the Lake County News, viz: on the 10th and 17th days of September 1898 which is a public weekly newspaper of general circulation printed and published in this County and proves said publications by the affidavit of S.E. Swaim, Editor and Publisher of said paper filed herein in these words (insert) and said Administrator further shows to the Court that he caused a like notice of the filing and said hearing of said final report by posting a like notice of such hearing and filing of said final report at the East door of the Court House of said County on the 13th day of August and on the 10th day of September 1898 and in proof thereof now files herein the affidavit of Geo. M. Eder which affidavit and copy of such notice so posted are each in these words (insert).

Thereupon said final report is submitted to the Court for hearing and the Court after examining said report and being fully advised in the premises approves the same and said Administrator thereupon pays into Court for distribution the sum of \$172.50 to be distributed as set forth in said final report to the children of a deceased son to-wit: To John Thielen, George P. Thielen and Lillian R. Thielen and to Ralph Thielen except the share of John Thielen which share has been assigned to Nicholas Thielen and by him retained as set forth in said final report and said Administrator is thereupon discharged and said Estate finally settled.

Geo. P. Thielen, received of Geo. M. Eder, Clerk, the sum of \$57.50 in full of my share in the estate of Peter Thielen, deceased. Receipt on file. Paid the above by draft Commercial Bank Crown Point, Indiana, No. 10679. October 10th, 1898.

Ralph A. Thielen, received of Geo. M. Eder, Clerk, the sum of \$57.50 in full of my share in the estate of Peter Thielen, deceased. January 18th, 1899 paid the above by check Commercial Bank, of Crown Point, Indiana, No. 1239 for draft payable to R.A. Thielen.



Lillian R. Thielen, received of Geo. M. Eder, Clerk, the sum of \$57.50 in full of my share in the estate of Peter Thielen, deceased. Receipt on file. Paid the above by draft Commercial Bank Crown Point, Indiana, No. 10681. October 10th, 1898.

Probate Order Book "F"  
Page 578

A F F I D A V I T

State of Indiana

SS:

County of Lake

Francis P. Keilman, being duly sworn on oath deposes and says that he is a resident of the village of St. John, St. John Township, Lake County, Indiana, and that he has been a resident perpetually for the last past 50 years or more and that he was acquainted with John Hack and Hannah Hack parents of Joseph Hack who is named as grantee in a certain Warranty Deed dated June 24th, 1850, and recorded in the Recorder's Office of Lake County, Indiana, July 1st, 1850 in Deed Record "E" page 405. And that affiant knows of his own personal knowledge that the parents of Joseph Hack are now both deceased, and have been dead for a number of years. Affiant further says that John Thielen, George P. Thielen, Ralph A. Thielen, Lillian R. Thielen, Nicholas Thielen, Elizabeth Schmal, Johanna Schmal, George Thielen, Vincent Thielen are the heirs at law and only heirs at law of Peter Thielen, deceased, and were named as defendants in a petition to sell certain real estate in cause No. 4723 in the Lake Circuit Court, Lake County, Indiana. Affiant further says that he purchased at said Administrator's sale the real estate described in said petition in Cause No. 4723 of the Lake Circuit Court a petition to sell said real estate by Nicholas Thielen Administrator of the estate of Peter Thielen, deceased, and that said Administrator Nicholas Thielen in signing said deed instead of signing his full name "Nicholas" ssigned as "Nick". Further affiant saith not.

/s/ Francis P. Keilman

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 2nd day of November 1908.

(seal) /s/ William F. Keilman  
Notary Public

My commission expires Jan. 5th, 1910  
Recorded February 1st, 1907, in Miscellaneous  
Record No. 36, page 230.





Above: John and Mary Pfeifer residence on Route 41. This home was located on what is now the St. John Mall.

Below: The farm of Bernard and Mary Boecker on Route 41. Travelers Restaurant now is located on the site. To the left of the house is the building that housed a cider mill. Both of these pictures were taken around the turn of the century.







Above: John Miller, Sr., and wife Mary in front of their farm home east of town, near Lancer Estates Subdivision.

Below: Home of Francis P. Keilman (the merchant) located on the west side of Patterson Street and which still exists two doors north of 93rd Street





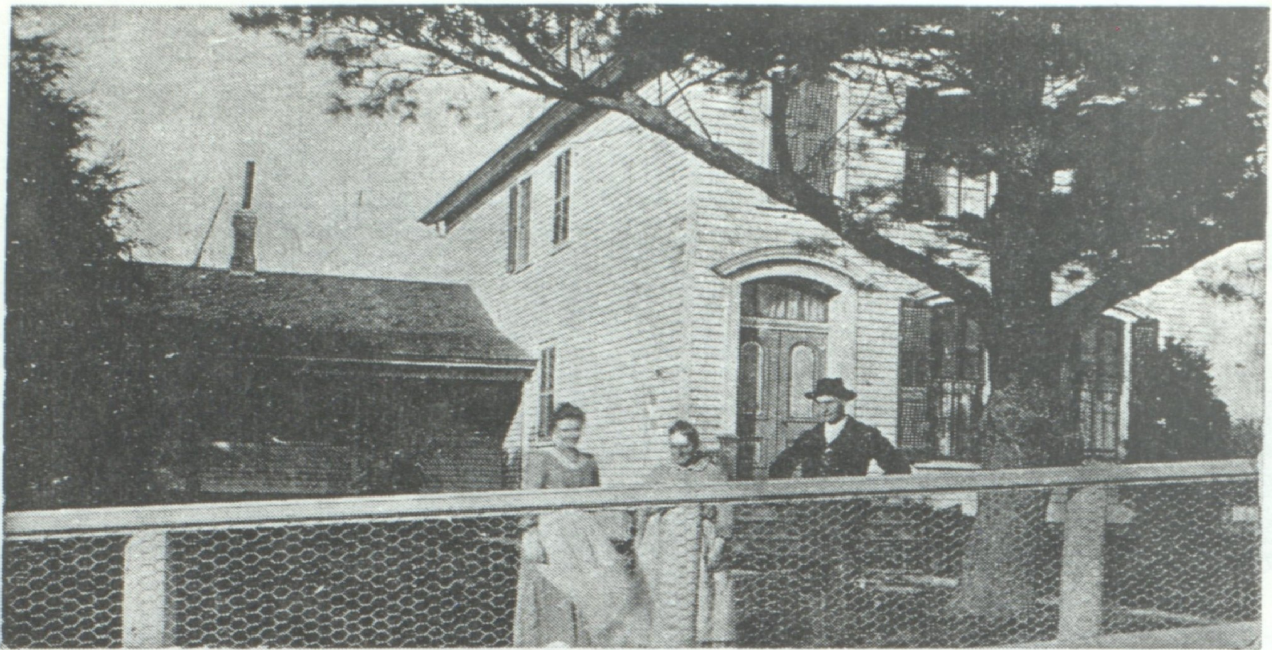


The picture above shows 93rd Street in 1909. Evidently it was called Main Street at that time as evidenced by the name written on the photo. The street was also named Schmal Street at one time. Notice that the street was nothing more than a dirt road.

The bottom photo is labeled Keilman Street, but it is more likely to be Patterson Street looking south. The fence on the right is the fence in front of the Francis P. Keilman home. This photo was taken around 1906, and possibly the street may have been called Keilman, but I doubt it. At one time the street was called Chicago Road.







The Scheidt residence on 93rd Street located on the north side, the second house west of the intersection of Patterson and 93rd Street and still in existence

The bottom photo is Christopher Boecker, one of St. John's shoemakers. He lived on the Boecker homesite on the east side of Route 41. He lived to be 99 and some months, passing away shortly after this photo was taken in 1915. Note the wooden shoes he wore.





## ST. JOHN BECOMES A SELF-GOVERNING MUNICIPALITY

Sometime in 1911, or possibly the year prior, several residents of the town, notably John Miller, Jr., Joseph M. Thiel, William Koehle and John Bohling discussed the possibility of incorporation for the community. They found that a number of other persons agreed with the idea, so in September, 1911, after a census to determine the population in the community, a petition was presented to the county commissioners asking authorization for a referendum to determine the attitude of citizens toward incorporation.

John Miller's son, Frank, tells an amusing story he heard from his father in connection with the incorporation effort. It seems that a resident of Schererville was in the process of incorporating Schererville at this same time and he had plans to include all of what is now St. John in his own town. Miller learned of his intention and a race to the county seat ensued to be the first to file incorporation petitions with the county commissioners. Miller was the winner because he drove his automobile to Crown Point while the other man made a more leisurely trip on horseback.

Acting on St. John's petition, commissioners set a referendum for October 17, 1911 in Kanmer's Hall. The proposal stirred much discussion in the community, and while there were many who favored incorporation, there were others who voiced their opposition. Inspectors selected to oversee the referendum were Josoph Portz, Joseph F. Gerlach and William Koehle.

When the votes were counted, it was found that fifty-five persons were for incorporation of the town and twelve against such a move. A total of sixty-seven votes cast does not seem as though many people were interested one way or the other, but one must remember that this was before women were allowed to vote.

Learning of the referendum result, the county commissioners decreed that St. John should become an incorporated town on November 6, 1911. With the incorporation came the necessity of electing a town board and clerk-treasurer, as well as make some provision for police protection. At the election that followed, John Miller, Jr., Joseph M. Thiel and William Koehle were chosen as the first Board of Trustees, and John G. Bohling was selected as the Clerk-Treasurer.

St. John's first town board meeting was held in the public school



# Census of the Town of Saint John, N.B. 1911

By Andrew Kammer, John Miller Jr. Geo. F. Gerlach, J. S. Jos. M. Thiel.

John Miller Jr.	5	1	Emil Stark	1	1
Geo. S. Gitsig	5	1	Peter Portz	4	1
Joseph Schmidt	4	1	Marg. Anterman	6	Wid
Nicholas Thiel	1	1	Barbara Scher	2	Wid
Frank Klassen	2	1	Mary A Mager	2	W.
John Miller Sr	2	1	Peter Scher	3	1
Andrew Kammer	2	1	Barb. Spanier	3	W.
Hobart Docter	1	1	Mrs. Geo. F. Gerlach	3	W.
A. M. Buchheit	3	1	John Pfeifer	5	1
Frank Thiel	2	1	Bernard Boecker	7	2
Henry Niebling	6	1	R. Muthart	5	1
Joseph M. Thiel	8	2	Kriestoph Boecker	1	1
Jacob Austgen	4	1	Mary Schultzy	2	W.
John Miller Jr.	2	1	Thos. F. Gannon	10	1
Peter Thiel	5	1	Peter Schaller	2	1
Math. Hart	1	1	Peter Keilman	3	1
Eberhard Thiel	7	1	Nie. Magnot	4	1
John G. Bohling	4	1	Mrs. (A. Heitman		
Peter Weingart	6	1	Jac. J. Bauermann Mrs	3	W.
Adam Adler	8	1	Joseph Herman	3	1
Ben. W. Klein	3	1	Joseph Portz	2	1
Michael Thiel	1	1	Henry Monioning	2	1
Jos. F. Klassen	4	1	A. F. Scott	3	1
Jos. P. Thiel	1	1	Roy Weaver	1	1
Geo. Bauerman	7	1	John Mager	1	1
Jos. K. Thiel	1	1	Wm. Busse	1	1
Thos. F. Nolan	8	1	Berard Austgen	1	1
Jos. F. Gerlach	10	1	Frank Gerlach	4	1
Nicholas Thiel	1	1	Mrs. G. P. Keilman	2	W.



Jos. W. Gerlach	2	1	Mrs Wm F. Keilman	7	W.
August Kechle	2	1	Joseph B. Schmal	3	1
Bon. H. Docter	1	1	Elisabeth Schmal	1	W.
Andrew Docter	5	1			
Niclas Ludwig	4	2			
Adam Gaud	1	1			
Nic. A. Dimmer	8	1			
Edw. Gungun	2	1			
Henry Jorgens	4	1			
Jac. P. Jannier	3	2			
Jacob H. Larson	7	1			
Wm. Schumacher	2	1			
Alb. Scherer	5	1			
Jacob Schumacher	1	1			
Henry Scherer	3	2			
Peter Stark	4	1			
Nic. A. Schuetz	4	1			
Bon. F. Bong	2	1			
Nic. J. Ludwig	1	1			
John Stark	7	2			
Bon. Hilbrich	5	1			
Jacob Schorn	2	1			
John P. Schaefer	5	1			
George Stark	11	1			
Wm. Kechle	3	1			
George Hilbrich	1	1			
Jany P. Anterman	1	1			
Math. Wachter	2	1			
Emil Larsen	3	1			
Nic. Boecker	1	1			
Edw. Schaefer	1	1			



Petition to Incorporate the Town of Saint John Id.  
Copy. August 28, 1858

✓ 1	John Miller Jr.	34	Andrew Docter
✓ 2	Geo. G. Lutesy	35	Nie Ludwig
✓ 3	Nie. Thiel	36	Adam Gard
✓ 4	Joseph Schudt	37	N. A. Kammer
✓ 5	Frank Klassen	38	Edw. Austgen
✓ 6	John Miller Sr.	39	Henry Juergens
✓ 7	Andrew Kammer	40	Jacob Kasper
✓ 8	Robert Docter	41	Jacob Klassen
✓ 9	A. M. Buchheit	42	Peter Schumacher
✓ 10	Frank Thiel	43	Albert J. Scherer
✓ 11	Henry Nubling	44	Jacob Schumacher
✓ 12	Joseph M. Thiel	45	Henry Baetker
✓ 13	Jacob Austgen	46	Joseph Baetker
✓ 14	John M. Thiel	47	Peter Stark
✓ 15	Peter Thiel	48	Nie. A. Schuetz
✓ 16	Math. Hart	49	Ber. F. Berg
✓ 17	Eberhard Thiel	50	Nie. J. Ludwig
✓ 18	John G. Bohling	51	John Stark
✓ 19	Peter Kingart	52	Wm. Koehle
✓ 20	Adam Adler	53	George Hulbrich
✓ 21	Ber. W. Klein	54	Bernard Hulbrich
✓ 22	Mich. Thiel	55	Jacob Scherer
✓ 23	Joseph F. Klassen	56	John P. Schaefer
✓ 24	Jos. P. Thiel	57	Long Stark
✓ 25	Leo Lammman	58	Long Anterman
✓ 26	Jos. P. Thiel	59	Edw. J. Thiel
✓ 27	Frederick Wolan	60	Jos. M. Gulick
✓ 28	Joseph Thiel	61	Emil Lamm
✓ 29	Wm. Thiel	62	Jos. G. Schaefer
✓ 30	Jos. M. Gulick	63	Wm. Schaefer
✓ 31	August Koehle	64	Edw. Schaefer
✓ 32	Math. F. Koehle	65	Emil Lamm
✓ 33	Ber. K. Docter	66	Emil Lamm
✓ 34		67	Emil Lamm



building on December 4, 1911. The group's initial action was to elect Miller president and appoint Nicholas Boecker as Town Marshal. Salaries for the marshal and town officials were established in the first ordinance passed. Each trustee received sixty dollars per year for his services, while the clerk-treasurer received one hundred dollars annually and the town marshal, three hundred dollars. The second town ordinance set up a street commission headed by Boecker. Two attorneys, Herbert S. Barr and Harold W. Wheeler were appointed as the first counsel for the newly-created municipality.

With incorporation came taxation, and the town's first tax levy, approved on September 3, 1912, called for a rate of forty cents for each



John Miller, Jr., first town board president in St. John  
Photo was taken when Miller was in his 80's.

one hundred dollars of assessed valuation for the general fund, and twenty-five cents for the street department. The first record of the town's assessed valuation was made in 1928. At that time the valuation stood at \$572,466. Fifty years later the figure had grown to nearly nine million dollars.

On August 22, 1912, the board granted a franchise to Northwestern Telephone Company to provide the town with telephone service.

The town board turned over control of the local schools to a school board which it appointed on February 2, 1914. The board consisted of John Bohling, Joseph Gerlach and Frank Thiel. Nicholas Ludwig supplanted John Bohling



as Clerk-Treasurer in 1914 and continued to hold this position for the next sixteen years.

John Miller, Jr., remained as board president through 1915, and William Koehle succeeded him the following year. Koehle, however, resigned later in the year and Edward Austgen was appointed in his place. Edward Schmal then finished the year as board president.

The community enjoyed the sound of band music during 1919, when a number of local musicians joined together to present a concert every Saturday in a bandstand situated just south of the present church site. Initially band members received no pay, but on August 4th, the town board voted to pay the group ten dollars for each performance.

An unusual event took place at the board meeting of January 5, 1920. At this session Peter Stark resigned and Joseph F. Warnecke was appointed to fill his chair. The appointment just made, Edward Schmal then resigned and John Miller, Jr. took his place. Miller immediately was elected president on the strength of the fact that he had previously served in that position. He served in this position until his resignation on November 12, 1923. On April 7, 1921, Joseph Warnecke resigned from the board and his place was taken by John Keilman. Keilman served until July, 1926 when he passed away and Walter G. Wolfe was appointed on August 2, to replace him.

A referendum on the question of whether St. John should construct its own electrical light plant was held on August 2, 1920. Prior to this time the only municipal



Nicholas Ludwig was St. John's second clerk-treasurer, serving for sixteen years starting in 1914



lighting consisted of gas lights. It was the duty of the town marshal to go through the streets each night and ignite the gas lights. Voters approved construction of the light plant by a fifty-seven to six vote. Bids were immediately sought and the construction contract eventually was awarded to Fred C. Hill of Crown Point. Hill's bid was for seven thousand, nine hundred, ninety-seven dollars and ninety-seven cents. St. John stayed in the electric light business for about five years, and on March 30, 1925, the board granted a franchise to Calumet Gas and Electric Co. to furnish light and power to the town.

On October 21, 1925, the town board, through a lease arrangement, turned over its electric plant to Calumet Gas and Electric Co. to use until the company completed installation of its own plant in St. John. This arrangement for power lasted just one year, for on March 8, 1926, the town board approved a special agreement with NIPSCO for street lights.

In 1927, a major highway improvement took place in St. John, when U.S. Route 41 was turned into a modern two-lane concrete highway. Prior to the turn of the century the road had been no more than a narrow dirt trail. Later on, the portion of the road that ran through the town became a cinder road, and sometime later the entire road was cindered.

Frank Miller, whose family had owned the corner of Route 41 and 93rd Street, and had operated a hotel and sample room and a garage just north of the hotel, has watched the highway grow from a mud and cinder road, to a modern concrete highway that, for many years, was called the most dangerous highway in the United States. Miller still likes to recount the story of how he sold an automobile to a farmer living south of town in the early 1920's

He had a difficult time delivering the car to the farm because of the mud road. The farmer who had made the purchase had an even more difficult time driving the car to St. John for his weekly shopping. The problem was solved by the farmer who used a team of horses to pull the car to St. John, where Route 41 was packed cinders. At that point he would unhitch the team, tie them to a hitching post, and drive the rest of the way into town.

Shanks and Gannon was the construction firm that had the contract to pave the highway. Most of the trucks the firm used were one-ton, Model-T Fords. Miller, who was an excellent mechanic, had the job of keeping the



trucks repaired, and it kept him quite busy throughout the construction period.

Miller purchased a tow truck at this time, because the improvement of the highway created more traffic than anyone had dreamed of and cars were always breaking down, or having an accident. Many times he worked night and day towing cars back to his garage. The biggest accident he ever took care of was a thirteen car pileup on a foggy morning south of town. He said it took him hours to clear away the cars.

Halfway between St. John and Route 30, there was, and still is, a low spot in the highway. This spot was known as the Route 41 sinkhole. The ground was soft, evidently a peat bog, and the contractor had a problem making the ground firm enough to hold the highway. For many years the



Side view of Miller's Hotel and Sample Room on Route 41 and 93rd Street, then known as Schmal Street. Photo was taken in the early 1900's.





Front view of the business taken in the 1940's. This picture also shows Miller's garage on the left adjacent to the tavern.

rumor persisted that the contractor had dumped railroad box cars in the hole, only to see them disappear from sight. Miller, who watched the construction of the highway daily, said that this was not true. Rather, he said, they used truckloads of sand and a blasting process to create an aeration effect and stabilize the roadbed.

In 1929, Roy Weaver was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Clerk-Treasurer Nicholas Ludwig, who had resigned after serving in that office since 1914. This appointment started a long political career for Weaver, one that lasted until the 1967 election, after 38 years in office.



Roy R. Weaver

Weaver came to St. John the day before Thanksgiving in 1910. He was a young man, eighteen years old, and he had been sent here by the Monon Railroad to take on the job of telegrapher and station master at the old depot. There had been a lot of rainfall just prior to his arrival and the streets were quite muddy. He really didn't like what he saw of St. John. In recounting his experiences many years





Above: Roy Weaver, as a young man, standing beside the Monon Depot  
 Below: Weaver at his desk inside the station.





later he said:

"When I saw how small St. John was, and the condition everything was in, I wanted to run down the tracks in an effort to catch the train."

Weaver walked into the depot and announced his arrival to the telegrapher on duty. Without so much as a "hello", and explanation of his duties, or even a "good-bye", the station master threw the keys on the desk and walked out. This reception, along with the rain and mud, made Weaver wish more than ever that he had not taken the job. He decided then and there that he would stay two weeks and then ask for a transfer elsewhere. He never asked for that transfer.

Weaver remained on duty at the Monon Depot until 1931, when it was closed because St. John was no longer a passenger stop. He then moved into the Monon tower located just north of 93rd Street, close to where the Monon (now the L & N) and the New York Central (now Conrail) tracks cross. Weaver remained on duty there until he retired in 1963.

There were no "Town Offices" for Weaver to work out of during his tenure in office. Instead, his home was his office. If you wanted to take out a building permit, or pay a water bill, you went to Weaver's home. If he wasn't at home, it merely meant that you returned another time. Weaver was 75 years old when he ran for office the last time and was defeated by Cora Krumm, owner of the "St. John Realty". It was a defeat that Roy Weaver did not expect, but many townspeople felt that his age, and the fact that some people felt he had been in office long enough, would be a factor in the election. This was true as evidenced by the final election results.

In all probability, Weaver's thirty-eight years in office is a record for Indiana elected officials, and probably will never be surpassed, because of the pressures that surround the elected officials of today. During his thirty-eight years, Weaver witnessed many changes that took place in St. John, changes, that came about because St. John was growing beyond the infancy years of a newly incorporated town, into the maturity of a self-governing community. When he first took office, simple methods of bookkeeping and record keeping were all that were required. As the years went by, systems, rules, and regulations by the state began to come into being, making the job much more complicated each year.



The final Town Board meeting for Roy Weaver was on December 11, 1967. The Town Board had prepared a surprise for Weaver by quietly inviting many of his old friends, family and neighbors to attend this meeting. The first item on the agenda was a tribute to the elder statesman, and when the Board presented him with a plaque honoring him for his many years of service to the town, he received a standing ovation. The presentation, along with a meeting room filled with people caused tears to be shed by many of them. Any why not. After all, it was the end of an era, the Weaver era.



Town Board President William Tuley presents a plaque to Roy R. Weaver, honoring him for his 38 years of service as clerk treasurer.



Organized baseball in St. John can be traced back to the 1920's when the games were played on a field in Springhill Grove, now known as Springhill Subdivision. The location of the diamond was at West Springhill Drive and 93rd Street, facing northeast. Around 1930, a group of interested baseball enthusiasts from the area formed the St. John Athletic Club and started playing games against other area teams from Dyer, Schererville, Griffith, Cook, (now Cedar Lake) Brunswick, and occasionally from as far away as Hammond.



The four Scheidt brothers  
Front row from left: Francis and Bob  
Standing from left: Clarence and Ralph

The St. John team was able to boast that there were four brothers playing on the team, Robert, Ralph, Clarence and Francis Scheidt. The four brothers still reside in St. John. Most of the players shown in the team photograph are still residents of St. John or at least live in the surrounding area. The manager of the team was Herb Gerlach, who also was a starting pitcher.

When Springhill Grove changed ownership, a new diamond was built on the property where the St. John Library is now located. The team played on this



field for several years and then moved to another diamond on the north side of town, west of Route 41, located on Patterson Street. This property was then owned by John Behrens of Dyer, and is now owned by the Schilling family. The team finished its playing days on this diamond in the late 1930's

#### ST. JOHN ATHLETIC CLUB



Front row, left to right: Ralph Scheidt, Clarence Scheidt and Ray Kammer.  
Middle row, left to right: Ed Hero, Dan Thiel, Robert Scheidt, Ray Gerlach and Francis Scheidt.  
Back row, left to right: Milan (Butch) Scherer, Ed Backe, Herb Gerlach, Harry Klein, Hubert Schutz and Al Specht.

The following page shows a box score from an early game against Brunswick, which is located west of Cedar Lake.



ST. JOHN A.C. (4)					BRUNSWICK (0)				
		AB	R	H		AB	R	H	
C. Scheidt	1b	3	0	0	Meyer	2b	3	0	0
R. Scheidt	ss	2	1	0	Govert	1f	3	0	0
Schutz	lf	3	1	1	Orr	3b	3	0	1
Scherer	rf	3	0	2	Giese	1b	3	0	2
R. Kammer	cf	3	0	1	Batterman	cf	3	0	1
Gerlach	p	3	1	1	Russell	c	2	0	0
C. Kammer	2b	3	1	1	F. Kammer	c	0	0	0
B. Scheidt	3b	2	0	0	Claus	rf	2	0	0
F. Scheidt	c	2	0	0	Mitch	ss	2	0	0
					Singleton	p	2	0	0
Totals		24	4	6			23	0	4

Struck out by Singleton, 4; Gerlach, 11  
Winning pitcher, Gerlach; Loser, Singleton  
Time of Game 1 hour, 10 minutes  
Date September 23, 1934

Town records do not indicate much activity from 1926 through 1929, and records are missing from February, 1930 to November 1937. Up to this point in the history of St. John, the various town board members did not remain in office for any great length of time.



The St. John Band. This band gave a concert on Saturdays and was paid ten dollars for each performance by the Town Board. The only identification here is Frank Miller, who played the trumpet. The arrow in the center points to Miller.



Often they did not serve out their term in office, preferring to resign. Even in those days, working, performing their duties as trustees, and taking care of their property required a lot of time.

In direct contrast to past practices of board members serving only a few years, was Joseph F. Scheidt. Scheidt took his seat on the town board January 1, 1926, and served for fifteen and a half years to May 12, 1941, when he suffered a severe stroke during a town board meeting. No longer able to serve, he resigned on August 11 that same year. He served as board president from 1937, and possibly before then, as the records are missing, until his resignation on August 11, 1941. Scheidt's son, Ralph, was appointed to fill his term.



Joseph F. Scheidt

In 1938, there is a reference made to the town's first building code and the fact that building permits would be required.

In 1939, the town board approved the sale of the first bond issue for the purchase of a new Town Hall. The issue was in the amount of five thousand dollars, and was sold to Raffensperger & Hughes and Company in Indianapolis at a rate of two and one-half percent per annum. This issue was evidently for the purchase of the brick school building pictured on the next page. The building still is used as a Town Hall for public meetings by the board.

The only piece of fire fighting equipment then owned by the town, was housed in the basement garage of the building. To get in or out, the vehicle had to be driven up or down a ramp, visible in the lower right of the photograph. The story goes that many times, in answer to a fire call, the firemen would have to push the rig up the ramp in order to get it started. In 1966, an addition was built on the west side of the building (right side of photo) in order to house all of the fire department equipment. This addition continues to serve the department today.

On March 20, 1941, a petition signed by seventy-seven home owners was submitted to the town board, calling for the construction of a municipal

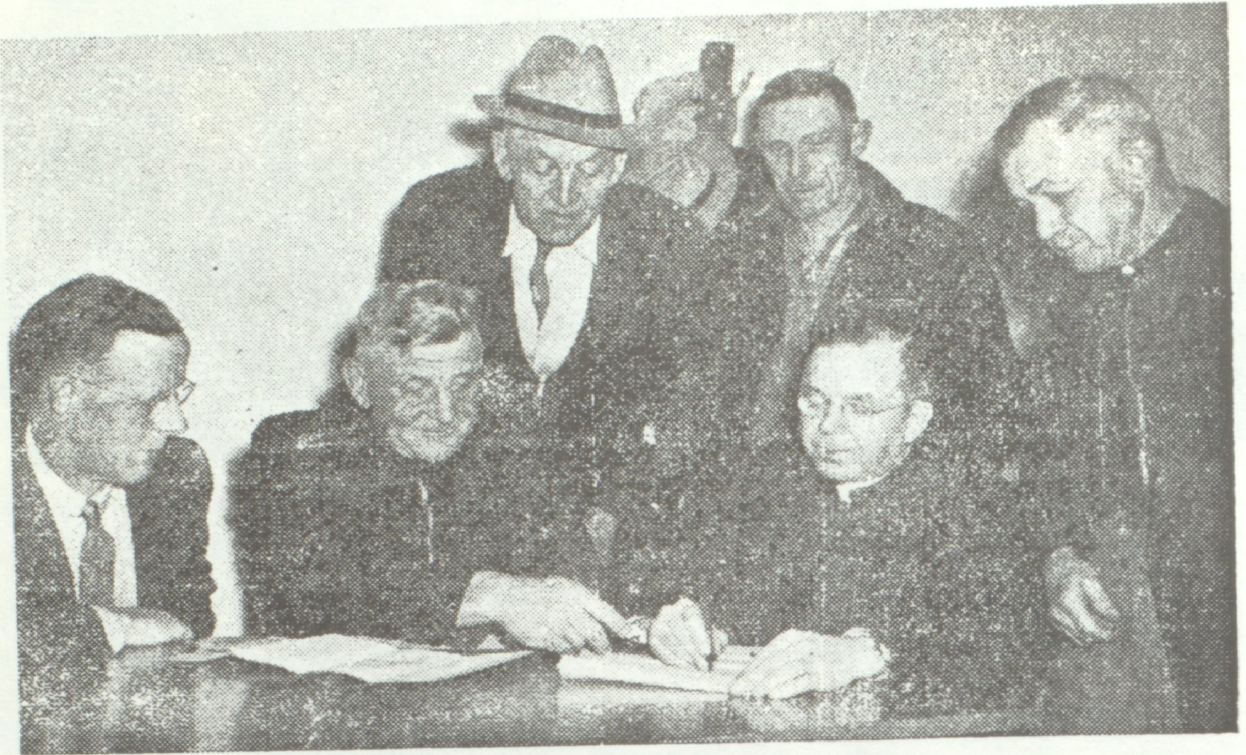




Photo above shows the still existing meeting hall (Town Hall). For many years the Fire Department used the basement (right side of photo) to house their one piece of equipment. Later, the garage on the left was built as they acquired more equipment.

water works for the town. The members of the board had been discussing this possibility for some time and the initial step was the petition requesting the project. After much discussion on the matter and because of the uncertainty of how many customers they would have, the decision was made to submit the question to a referendum vote of the residents of the town. The vote was scheduled for April 18. The voters favored the costly project by a vote of one hundred, twenty-four for the construction and none against it. The plan called for sinking of a deep well, construction of a sixty thousand gallon water tower behind the town hall, and installation of the water mains. Before the project could be approved by the Indiana Public Service Commission, the town officials had to show they had at least seventy residents willing to subscribe for the water service. The board members set a two-day period at the town hall when people could subscribe for water. At the end of the two days, a total of seventy-seven subscribers





In the above photo, Clerk-Treasurer Roy Weaver and Town Board President Joseph Scheidt, watch as Rev. Fred C. Rothermel, pastor of St. John's Catholic Church, signs up as a subscriber for water service. Standing and awaiting their turn to sign up as subscribers are, left to right, Fire Chief Ben W. Klein, A. J. Scherer and Eberhard J. Thiel.

had put their names on the dotted line. St. John's most costly project to date was underway.



Peter Thielen

As mentioned earlier, Town Board President Joseph Scheidt was stricken with a stroke at the May board meeting. Peter Thielen, a descendant of the Peter Thielen who had recorded the plat of the town in 1818, was elected board president, pro-tem. When Scheidt did resign in August, Thielen was immediately elected president of the board, and the board's first action was to appoint Scheidt's son, Ralph, to fill the vacancy created by the elder Scheidt's resignation. Ralph Scheidt continued to serve on the board until July 14,



1943, when he resigned in order to enlist in the United States Navy.

These were the World War II years, and St. John, just as the larger cities around her, was undergoing a tremendous feeling of patriotism, the problems of the various types of rationing, and above all, the youth of the community leaving to enter the various branches of the armed services. There was hatred for Hitler's Germany, not for the country that so many residents could trace their heritage to, but to the political group that controlled the country. Since the forefathers of a good many residents of St. John had come from Germany, some of St. John's citizens were investigated for the possibility of ties to the Nazi regime. It had to cause resentment when you consider the fact that the roots of these people went back to Germany a hundred or more years prior.

In 1947, the Indiana State Legislature passed a law allowing small towns to establish Plan Commissions for their communities. The law was not



Harold G. Muenich

mandatory, but left the creation of these commissions to the discretion of the local governing body.

In 1949, the Town Board, which consisted of Otto Von Borstel, President, Frank Miller and Eberhard Dewes, had heard rumors to the effect of war-time quonset buildings being moved into St. John to be used as rental units. The plan was opposed by the town board, but with no local control over

housing, there was no way to stop the move. The decision was made to create a planning commission. The commission would be formed under the new state law, and made up of the three town board members and four citizen members.

The town board passed the ordinance creating the St. John Plan Commission, and appointed themselves, Von Borstel, Dewes, and Miller to the planning board, along with citizen members, Harold G. Muenich, Dan Thiel



and Alex Gaber. Muenich was immediately named head of the commission, and the first order of business was the adoption of a zoning ordinance that prohibited the undesirable housing units they feared might come into town. As head of the mortgage loan department for a savings and loan association, Muenich was well qualified to serve on the planning commission, because of his vast knowledge of real estate and building. Muenich remained as Chairman of the plan commission for twenty-three years. In 1972, he resigned as chairman, but remained on the board as a citizen member for another year. The town's first formal building code was established in 1955. The first subdivision code was authored in 1953, and the building code was completely rewritten in 1967.



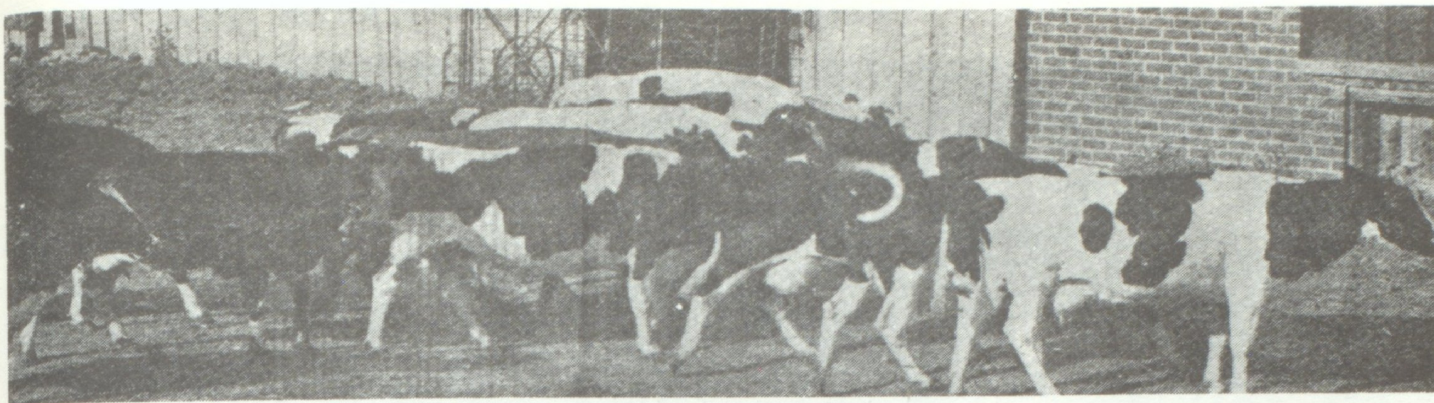
The 1949 St. John Plan Commission had the reputation of operating with "an eye to the future". Seated from left to right are: Eberhard Dewes; Alex Gaber, secretary; Harold G. Muenich, president; Peter Halfman, vice-president; and Frank Miller. Standing from left to right are: Daniel Thiel and Otto Von Borstel.

Even though St. John had grown a great deal since its founding days, it continued to maintain its agricultural and rural atmosphere. There were some farms still in operation within the corporate limits. Dairy farming in 1949 was probably the largest business operating in the town.

One such dairy farm was a six hundred acre farm owned by Drs. Hugh and Hedwig Kuhn. This farm was located on the south side of the town and on the west side of Route 41. It is now the site of Homestead Acres



Subdivision. The farm was managed by Harold "Hal" Foltz.



Pictured above is part of the large dairy herd at the Homestead Acres farm of Drs. Hugh and Hedwig Kuhn. It was one of the largest dairy farms in the St. John area.

Another farm, entirely different from the Kuhn dairy farm, was the Idlewild Farms, Inc. This was a poultry farm located directly across Route 41 from the Kuhn Homestead Acres farm. Idlewild Farms, managed by Sherman H. Applebaum, produced one hundred thousand fryers and broilers in 1949. It was one of the largest poultry farms in northern Indiana.



Pictured above: Idlewild Farms, Inc. at St. John. Manager Sherman T. Applebaum is pictured at the extreme right of the photo.

In 1959, plans were announced by Standard Lumber Company of Hammond to build a multi-million dollar building supply complex in St. John. The plans called for the construction of a large lumber supply section, as well as buildings for electrical, plumbing and general hardware supplies. It was hoped that this building supply complex would in turn attract other businesses to locate in St. John. It would, of course be a tremendous boost to the tax base for the town. The lumber supply yard was constructed, starting late in 1959. For some reason the huge complex never



really got beyond the lumber supply portion, which was added to on at least two occasions in later years.



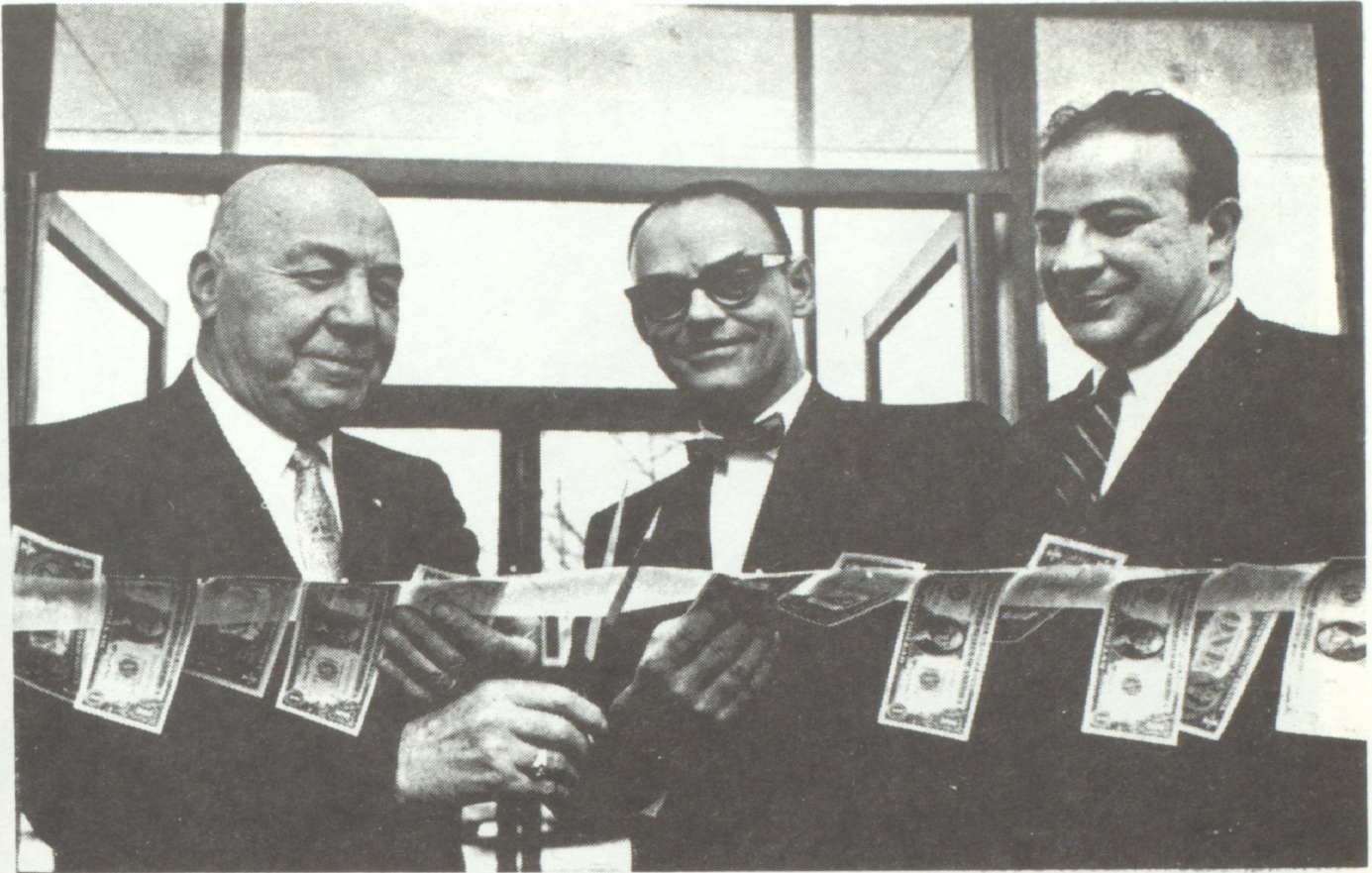
Groundbreaking ceremonies for St. John's first major commercial construction by Standard Lumber Co., September 30, 1959. From left: Newly elected Town Board members Alex Gaber; William Tuley; Louis Cinko; James Thiel, Town Trustee; Roy Rubright; E.B. Dewes, Town Board President; Walter Resan; Arthur Krumm; James Dye; Earl Moore; and Richard Dye with the shovel.

Business growth for St. John in the 1960's continued to grow ever so slowly, but never quite reaching the expectations of the town officials who favored business growth for the town. Officials sought out and invited businesses to locate in town. Not only was this done to help the tax base, but also to create a business atmosphere for employment and to enable residents to shop locally rather than travel to other towns.

In the mid 1960's St. John got its first financial business when Security Federal Savings and Loan Association of East Chicago opened a



branch in town. The first office was in a rental building next to the post office on Joliet Street. The plan was to see how the business would fare in St. John before a new office was constructed.



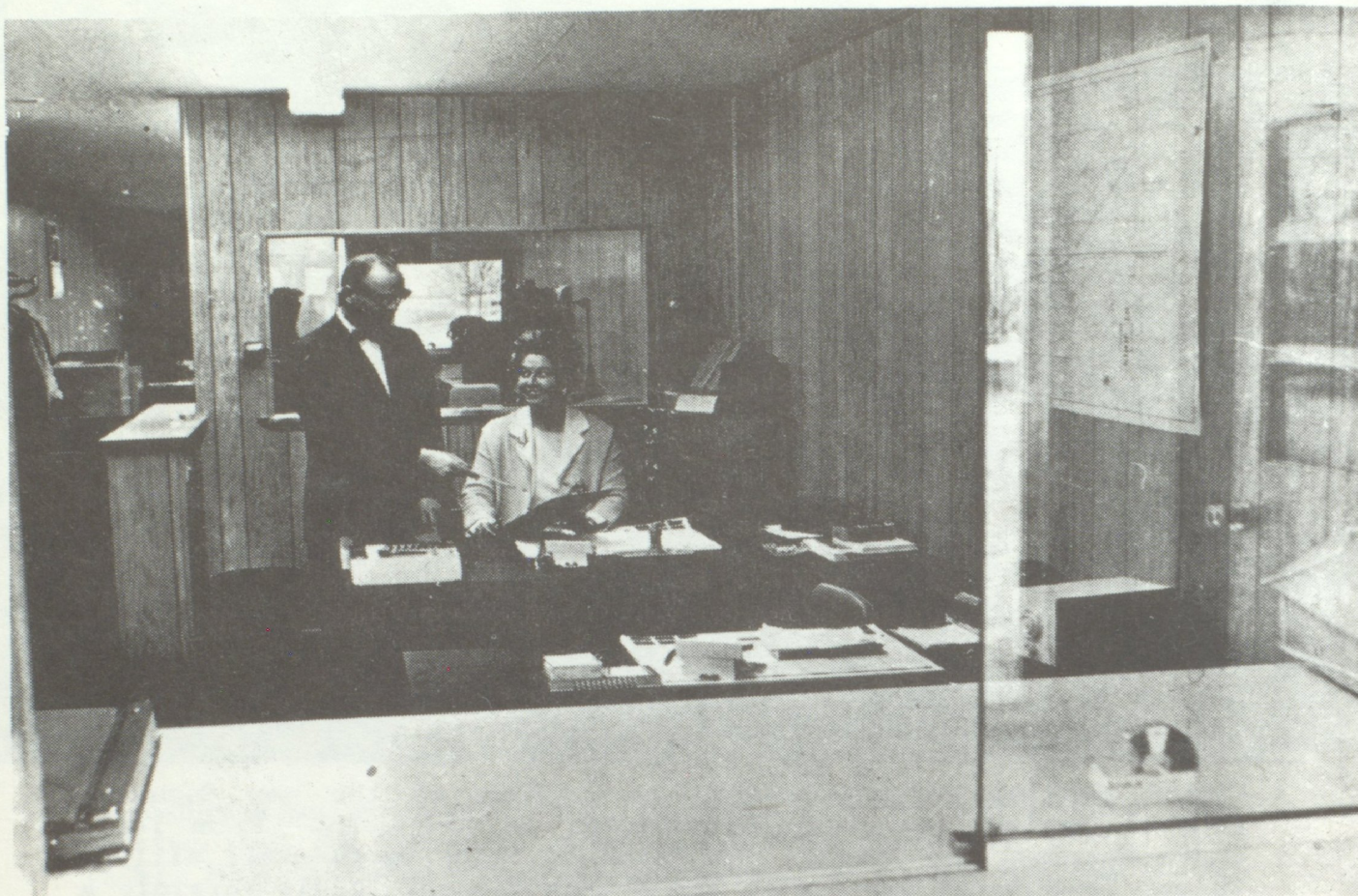
Ribbon cutting ceremonies for the opening of the new Security Federal Savings and Loan Association in St. John. From left: Louis Ferrini, Chairman of the Board of Security Federal; William Tuley, Town Board President; and Branch Manager, Louis Ferrini, a nephew of the elder Ferrini.

It did not take long for the savings and loan officials to find out that the residents of St. John needed and wanted this type of business. In 1968 land was purchased on the south east corner of the intersection of Route 41 and 93rd Street, and there Security Federal built their new Savings and Loan office.

January of 1968 was a busy month in St. John. As mentioned, the town had a new bank building, and at the same time, town officials opened their new town hall office and police station. Ever since incorporation in 1911, town officials had operated from their homes, accepting phone calls, visits



from citizens who wanted to ask a question, or to register a complaint, and calls from salesmen who wanted to do business with the town. The office clerks did double duty in doing both routine office work and acting as police radio operators in the new town hall office.



Office clerk, Norma Ponton receives instruction from William Tuley, Town Board President upon the opening of the new Town Hall office, January 14, 1968.

This situation did not last too long due to the amount of business that came across the counter from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. week days and 8:00 until noon on Saturday. Eventually a separate structure had to be constructed to house just the Clerk-Treasurer, the office staff and a room for the members of the board.

It was with a great deal of sadness that residents learned in January, 1968, that the Catholic school on Route 41 would be torn down upon completion of the new school. A good many of the older residents, born and



raised in St. John, retain many fond memories of their childhood days spent in this school.



St. John Catholic School prior to its destruction in 1968. The school was built around 1919.

ST. JOHN TOWN BOARD MEMBERS  
PRESIDENTS, AND CLERK-TREASURERS  
1911 to 1980

1911     John Miller, Jr., Board President  
         Joseph M. Thiel  
         William Koehle  
         John G. Bohling, Clerk-Treasurer

These first officials served to 1916 with the exception of Clerk-Treasurer John Bohling, who resigned after serving two years and one month in office. He was replaced by Nicholas Ludwig.

1916     William Koehle, Board President  
         Edward J. Schmal  
         Peter Stark  
         Nicholas Ludwig, Clerk-Treasurer

William Koehle resigned November 16, 1916 and Edward Austgen was named to replace him. Edward Schmal finished the year as Town Board President.

1917     Edward Schmal, Board President  
         Peter Stark  
         Edward Austgen  
         Nicholas Ludwig, Clerk-Treasurer



Edward Schmal and Peter Stark served into January, 1981, when they both resigned on January 5. Stark was the first to resign, and Joseph F. Warnecke was immediately named to replace him. As soon as the appointment was made Edward Schmal resigned and former Town Board President, John Miller, Jr., was named to fill the vacancy.

1921      John Miller, Jr., Board President  
            Edward Austgen  
            Joseph F. Warnecke  
            Nicholas Ludwig, Clerk-Treasurer

On April 7, 1921, Joseph Warnecke resigned from the board and was replaced by John Keilman. These officials served to 1924 with the exception of John Miller who resigned on November 12, 1923 and was replaced by Charles Thier.

1924      Edward Austgen, Board President  
            John Keilman  
            Charles F. Thier  
            Nicholas Ludwig, Clerk-Treasurer

This board served to 1926 when Thier and Austgen were replaced.

1926      Joseph M. Gerlach, Board President  
            John Keilman  
            Joseph F. Scheidt  
            Nicholas Ludwig, Clerk-Treasurer

Trustee John Keilman passed away in July 1926, and the board appointed Walter G. Wolfe to replace him. This group of officials remained in office to 1930. Of these officials, Nicholas Ludwig had served a total of 16 years as Clerk-Treasurer. He resigned and was replaced by Roy Weaver.

1930      Walter G. Wolfe, Board President  
            Joseph Scheidt  
            Jacob Spanier  
            Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

Town records from January 1930 through November 1937 are missing, and it was impossible to determine who the various town officials were during that period. When the records do resume in 1937 Joseph Scheidt was still a member of the Board and Roy Weaver was still the clerk.

1937      Joseph F. Scheidt, Board President  
            Peter Thielen  
            George Maginot  
            Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer



This board and the clerk remained intact until May 12, 1941, when Board President Joseph F. Scheidt suffered a severe stroke during the meeting. On June 9, because of the anticipated lengthy absence of Joseph Scheidt, Peter Thielen was elected Board President pro-tem. On August 11, Scheidt officially resigned the board, and on September 8, Scheidt's son, Ralph J. Scheidt, was appointed to fill the vacancy.

1942     Peter Thielen, Board President  
         George Maginot  
         Ralph J. Scheidt  
         Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

The following year, board member Ralph Scheidt resigned the Town Board when he enlisted in the armed forces.

1944     Peter Thielen, Board President  
         George Maginot  
         Gilbert Upchurch  
         Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

This group of officials remained in office until 1947 when Otto Von Borstel replaced George Maginot.

1947     Peter Thielen, Board President  
         Gilbert Upchurch  
         Otto Von Borstel  
         Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

In 1948 two new board members appeared on the scene. Frank Miller, son of the Town's first board president, John Miller, was elected to office along with Eberhard Dewes. Von Borstel was the only incumbent.

1948     Otto Von Borstel, Board President  
         Eberhard Dewes  
         Frank Miller  
         Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

These officers remained in office through 1951 when a new election was held.

1952     Eberhard Dewes, Board President  
         James Thiel  
         Elmer Sladek  
         Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

The officers named above stayed in office until 1956 when the election put a new member on the Town Board.



Eberhard Dewes



1956      Eberhard Dewes, Board President  
             James Thiel  
             Alex Gaber  
             Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer



1948 to 1952 Town Board. From left: Eberhard Dewes; Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer; Otto Von Borstel, President; and Frank J. Miller.

These board members remained in office until 1960 when two new members took their seats on the board.

1960      Louis Cinko, Board President  
             Alex Gaber  
             William Tuley  
             Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

This group stayed in office through 1962, but some changes were made in 1963. Louis Cinko, the board president, had been elected St. John Township Trustee and had to resign from the Town Board effective January 1, 1963. Donald Krumm was appointed to fill the vacancy, and the board, in turn, elected William Tuley as President of that body. Krumm served only until May 13, 1963 when he resigned, and John L. Fox was appointed to fill out the balance of the year.

1964      William Tuley, Board President  
             Hugh G. Smith  
             Eugene R. Smith  
             Roy R. Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer

The three board members served until



Louis Cinko



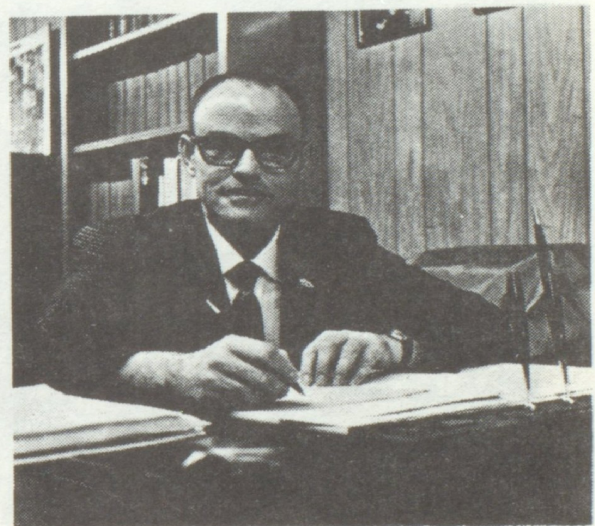


1963 St. John Town Board. From left: Alex Gaber; Roy Weaver, Clerk-Treasurer; William Tuley;,, Board President; and Donald Krumm.

1972. Roy Weaver was unseated by Cora Krumm as Clerk-Treasurer in the 1967 election. Mrs. Krumm resigned on May 12, 1969, after serving one year and four months. Betty L. Siedelmann was appointed to the post on June 9, 1969.

The election of William Tuley to the board in 1959 was the beginning of a long political term for him in St. John. He remained on the board until 1980. The last 17 years on the board he served as President of the board. During his 20 years he also put in 17 years on the Plan Commission.

1972 William Tuley, Board President  
Eugene R. Smith  
Kenneth Fehlberg  
Betty Siedelmann, Clerk-Treasurer



William T. Tuley





1964 to 1972 Town Board. From left: Eugene J. Smith; William Tuley, Board President; and Hugh G. Smith.



1972 to 1976 Town Board and Clerk-Treasurer being sworn into office. From left: Attorney, Albert C. Hand; William Tuley, Board President; Betty Siedelmann, Clerk-Treasurer; Kenneth Fehlberg; and Eugene Smith.



This group of officials stayed in office until 1976 when Hal Foltz replaced Eugene Smith on the board.

1976 William Tuley, Board President  
Kenneth Fehlberg  
Hal Foltz  
Betty Siedelmann, Clerk-Treasurer

These officials served until 1980. William Tuley, member of the board for 20 years and president of the board for 17 years, chose not to run again. This year the town became embroiled in a bitter election in which three political parties submitted candidates.

For many years the Town Board and Clerk-Treasurer had all been members of the Citizens Party. Now on the scene were candidates from the Independent Party, the Progressive Party, as well as the Citizens Party. Charges and counter charges were in the newspapers almost daily. This went on for months prior to the election. Many letters from each party were mailed out to the residents. Local radio stations continually had news about the coming election. Finally, election day arrived and St. John had the highest voter percentage turnout in the State of Indiana. The incumbent board member, Hal Foltz, plus two



Betty L. Siedelmann



1980 Town Officials from left: Betty Siedelmann, Clerk-Treasurer; Hal Foltz; Peter Evans, President; James Blythe; Albert Hand, Town Attorney.



newcomers to the political scene, and the incumbent Clerk-Treasurer, all Citizens Party members, were elected by a 3 to 1 margin.

When the year 1980 started it marked the end of one era and the beginning of a new one. The simplified election where a meeting of all community residents would be held would be a thing of the past. Nominations would be made from the floor and paper ballots would be passed out and the election would be decided there and then. Usually the hall would be packed with many people standing. One year there were so many people in attendance that the meeting was quickly moved to the Kolling School gym.

In all probability, voter turnout, from a percentage standpoint, was as great as many communities that had gone to the two-party system with voting machines.

Changes always take place in due time. It was now time for St. John to undergo the change to the Republican-Democrat two-party system of election, all in the hands of the Lake County Election Board. However, before this change took place, William Tuley in the last of his 17 consecutive years as Town Board President would receive an honor that was rarely given to governmental officials. In 1979, he received the Indiana Association of Cities



Indianapolis Mayor William Hudnut III presents award to William T. Tuley



and Towns Outstanding Elected Official Award. This is the highest award given to elected officials and this was only the fourth time in the 33 year history of the Indiana Association the award was given, and it was the first time ever to an elected official from northern Indiana. Indianapolis Mayor William Hudnut III made the surprise presentation to Tuley at the annual convention dinner in South Bend.

The first order of business confronting the new Town Board was the construction of the long awaited sewer system that had been in the planning stages for many years. However, the long wait was still not over as there were still more delays, new rules and policies set down

by the Federal Government. Finally the bidding process was started and approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. Total cost of the project had now soared to a mere 13 million dollars.

It was hoped that construction would start in the fall of 1980, but this was not to be. Finally, in the spring of 1981, construction was underway with grants from the EPA, Farmers Home Administration and the State Board of Health providing most of the funds. St. John's share of the 13 million dollar project was \$2,635,000. A big undertaking.

Hal Foltz Town Board  
President 1982/83

When the new Town Board took over in 1980, the members decided that they would change the presidency each year. Peter Evans took the presidency the first year, and he was followed in 1981 by James Blythe, with Hal Foltz serving as the president in 1982 and again in 1983.

Since 1979, rumors had persisted that a major discount store would be coming to St. John. The Town Board at that time had heard the rumors as well, although none of the franchise stores had ever approached the board members as to the possibility. Finally a representative of the K-Mart store chain contacted the town officials as to the feasibility of locating one of their stores in St. John.



This would be the first general merchandise store in St. John since the Francis P. Keilman General Store in the mid 1800's. Now the headaches began for the new Town Board. Tremendous opposition to the store came from the residents of the Homestead Acres Subdivision, near the location of the store.

Residents of the subdivision maintained there would be an increase of crime, influx of undesirables, and traffic problems with the construction of the store. Many delays and public hearings ensued, but a permit to construct the new store was granted. It is interesting to note that none of the objections to the store ever came to pass to any great degree. However, there was one criminal event that did take place, and is covered later in the book

Problems with the sewer construction continued to plague the Town Board. Delays by one contractor and poor workmanship finally caused a complete work stoppage in one area of St. John. Finally the contractor's contract was terminated with approval of the EPA. This portion of the construction now had to be re-bid for completion and replacement of some work that had already been done. As events turned out, this board would no longer be in office to see the sewer work finished.

1984 marked the beginning of Betty Siedelmann's 15th consecutive year as the Clerk-Treasurer in St. John. Only Roy Weaver, who served 38 years as Clerk-treasurer for St. John had been in that position longer. Nicholas Ludwig was Clerk-Treasurer for 16 years prior to Roy Weaver's time, but by the end of this current term, Siedelmann will have served 19 years, surpassing Ludwig's term in office.

The election of 1983 would bring some new faces to the Town Board with the start of 1984. Dave Bielski and Jerry Matlon, along with John Herr would comprise the Town Board. John Herr had served on the Board



in 1983, when he was elected under the staggered terms system that had been instituted, making sure that all three board members could not be replaced at one time.

Herr was immediately elected president of the board, as he had already served one year. Dave Beilski was to become president in 1985, with Jerry Matlon serving as president in 1986 and 1987.

In spite of the bad economy that persisted in Lake County in the late 1970's and 1980's, St. John had some slight growth. New home construction had come to a virtual standstill, but now is back on the rise, and there has been some business growth as well.

For example, in 1960, the total budget of St. John was about \$50,000, with an assessed valuation for the town under \$500,000. In 1980, the budget figures had jumped to \$876,578 with the valuation going up to \$7,019,645.

By 1987, the budget had gone up to a total of \$1,555,079 with the valuation of property increasing to \$14,356,400. This increase in valuation has kept the tax rate from going far above what can be considered a reasonable rate in these days of high prices and high cost of living, and much of the valuation increase can be attributed to the K-Mart Store, expansion of the various Schilling enterprises and new homes.

Keeping books and records for St. John is like keeping records for a business with revenues of \$1,556,079 annually, but still it is different. You must comply with the State Board of Accounts rules and regulations.

They tell you how they want the books

kept, and it must be done their way, and every year they come up with something new for the Clerk-Treasurer.



1984 Town Board Members from the left: David Bielski, Jerry Matlon, and John Herr.  
--Photo courtesy The Times



One of the biggest problems is keeping within the appropriations for the many different funds any town has. These funds have to be kept separate, and not one penny over the appropriated amount can be spent.

A few years ago the Clerk-Treasurer was able to handle the office duties, and bookkeeping alone, but this is not the case anymore. The work required is much more than any one person can do, so Betty Siedelmann now has a staff to assist her, and they are pictured below.



The Staff of the Clerk-Treasurer's Office: Seated Betty Siedelmann, Clerk-Treasurer. From left: Patty Doner, Rose Young and Lorraine Boecker.



Albert C. Hand

When a newly elected Town Board takes office, they often make changes to show that they are now in charge. Some changes are made because the board feels that it is necessary to make that change. Whatever the reason, the 1984 Town Board decided that it was time for a new Town Attorney, and they made the change immediately after taking office on January 1, 1984.

Albert C. Hand, Senior Partner of the law firm of Hand, Muenich and Wilk was replaced. Hand had been the Town Attorney for 20 years, having been hired by Town Board President William Tuley in 1963.

He was the first St. John Town Attorney to attend



the Board meetings regularly. The few times that he did not attend he had a representative there. The board used to have a pre-board meeting on Saturday morning prior to the Monday night regular meeting, and Hand also attended these and any other meeting that the board might have.

Tuley remembers when his mother passed away and he was at a Public Service Commission hearing in Indianapolis, and Hand arranged to have him flown back here on a private plane at no charge.

When Albert Hand was hired as the Town Attorney his fee was \$500 a year, and that included attendance at meetings and drawing up legal documents and ordinances. This fee remained the same for several years, until the use of an attorney was required more and more. Then, out of necessity his fees increased. St. John has been blessed over the years with many dedicated employees, and Albert Hand is certainly one of them.

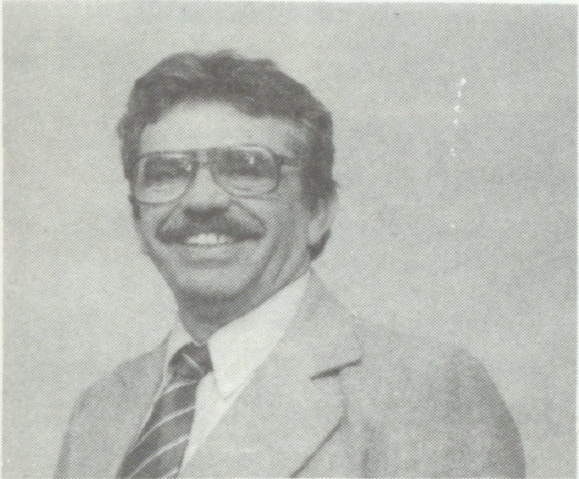
In 1986, it was time, once again, for the election of the odd-year board member. John Herr decided that one term was enough for him and he chose not to run. Two candidates, Douglas Patterson, a Republican and Dennis Kwiatkowski, a Democrat, vied for the post.

Patterson played a rather low key role, campaigning quietly and putting up a few signs. Kwiatkowski flooded the town with signs, and it appeared that he would be the winner. When the votes were tallied Patterson was the winner by about 29 votes. Isn't there a saying about still water runs deep?

Douglas Patterson

The St. John Planning Commission for years has been a very important right arm to the Town Board, and continues to be so today. Many things pertaining to planning and development must go before the Plan Commission prior to review by the Town Board.

In these years of growth the function of the Plan Commission member becomes even more important, and so it is today.





Pictured below: 1987 Plan Commission, Back left to right:  
Tom Popeila, Richard Millard, Jerry Rudy, David Bielski.  
Front left to right: Ken Gembala, Douglas Patterson, Mark  
Maloian

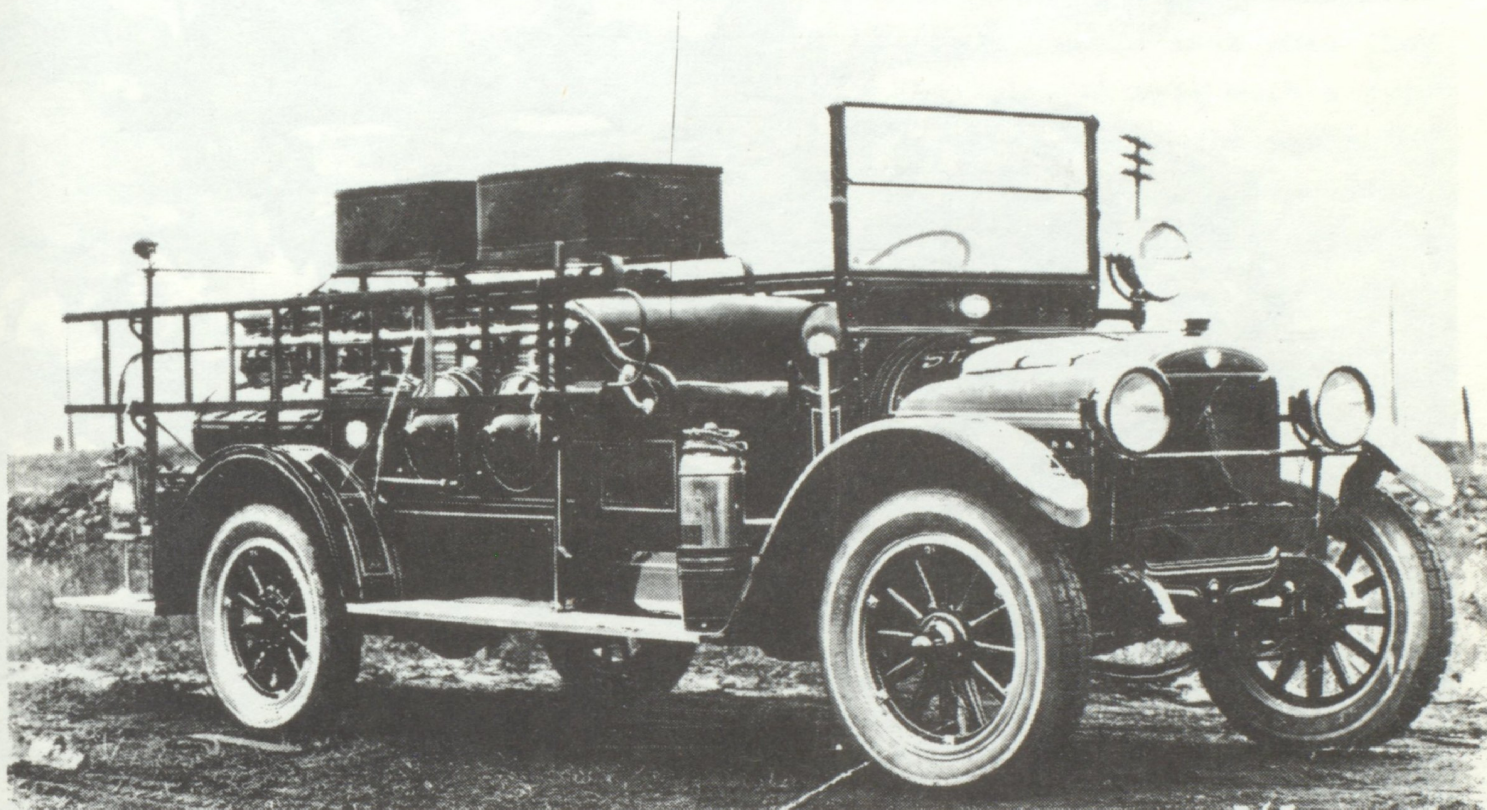




## THE ST. JOHN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

In 1910, a year prior to the formal incorporation of St. John, a number of community leaders were of the opinion that the time had come to provide some type of fire protection for homes of the residents. As a result, the town's volunteer fire department was born, and continues a thriving existence today.

Initially, the department was made up of 12 men, but they had absolutely no equipment of any kind with which to fight fires. In emergencies they depended on a bucket brigade system to quench the flames at fire sites, however, each man had to furnish his own bucket.



First motorized fire engine for the St. John Fire Department.



With incorporatrion of the town in 1911, the fire department started slowly to grow and modernize. In 1913 the town board purchased three extension ladders and six buckets for use by the fire department. This equipment, such as it was, was placed in three different locations in town for the purpose of protecting the property of an estimated 300 residents.

A giant modernization step forward came in 1914 when a portable Obenshain-Boyer chemical fire engine was purchased for \$550. This piece of equipment was horse-drawn and two 45-gallon water tanks were mounted on it. Since the outfit was useless without horses, an arrangement was made



First Mack fire engine purchased by the fire department in 1945.



that in an emergency the first fireman to arrive at the station with a team of horses was to receive five dollars.

With acquisition of the fire engine, a place to store it became a necessity. This need was filled when a structure for the purpose was erected on Joliet Street. The building which cost \$509, later served as the town hall for a number of years. In 1926 the first motorized equipment was purchased in the form of a Reo truck with two chemical tanks. Cost of the vehicle was \$3,670.

As the years rolled by and the town grew, larger quarters were needed for the fire department. These finally were obtained in 1936 when the town purchased the brick school building on Schmal Street (now known at 93rd Street) for use as a town hall and housed the fire department in the basement.

Members of the St. John Volunteer Fire Department always have been dedicated and innovative. This was amply demonstrated in 1952 when they built their own truck which consisted of a Chevrolet chassis with a pump powered by a Chrysler motor. The pump was installed behind the cab which permitted operation of the truck and pumping of water at the same time. Heretofore, it had been necessary to halt the truck before pumping could begin.

In the mid-1940's many volunteer fire departments were being organized in small towns throughout Indiana. St. John's volunteers felt, along with their counterparts in nearby towns, that everyone would benefit from formation of a state-wide organization. Such an organization, they believed, could be most useful by providing badly needed training materials and conducting successful lobbying efforts in the state legislature for passage of legislation of interest and benefit to volunteer fire departments. Such a group, they argued, would narrow that gap in experience and efficiency that existed between professional fire fighters found in larger cities and their volunteer brethren in hamlets and small towns. The end result was that the St. John department joined with others and the combined group was instrumental in founding the Indiana Volunteer Fire Association, an organization still in existence. In 1953, the St. John volunteers received an award for the "Best Volunteer Fire Department in Indiana." This is the highest achievement recognition that any





Above: St. John Fire Department allows the Catholic School to burn down after the completion of the new school in 1968.

Below: After many years in quarters that were slightly less than adequate, the St. John Volunteer Fire Department moved into this modern facility in 1966. The structure is on the west side of the town hall and police department. Prior to this time the department occupied a two-stall garage on the east side of the town hall.





voluntary group of fire fighters can receive.

In 1945 the wives of the firemen decided they could be a help to the firemen if they formed the "Fire Ladies Auxilliary. The organization was finalized on November 5 of that year, and ten ladies in the group elected the following officers:

President	Mrs. Vern Kirby
Vice President	Mrs. Josephine Miller
Secretary	Mrs. Verna Thiel
Treasurer	Mrs. Josephine Scheidt

Throughout the years this group has held various fund raising events, and when a sizable sum had been taken in they purchased various items of equipment needed by the department. The firemen themselves have always



VOLUNTEER FIREMEN of St. John meet on the first Monday of each month to drill and discuss various problems. Shown here from left to right are: Peter Halfman, treasurer; Willard Pierce, lieutenant; Nicholas Thiery, assistant chief; James Thiel, second captain; and Andrew Thiel, secretary.



ST. JOHN FIREMEN'S auxiliary helps plan social activities for the department. Shown from left to right are: Mrs. Willard Pierce, vice president; Mrs. A. Thiel, president, and Mrs. J. Thiel, secretary-treasurer.

held an annual dance to raise money for the department. The dances go back to at least 1930 as the following figures show their expenses and profits



for the dance held on November 16, 1930:

Total Admissions . . . . .	\$39.00	
Hall Rent . . . . .	\$ 2.50	
Printing Bills . . . . .	\$ 3.50	
Music . . . . .	<u>\$20.00</u>	
Total Expense . . . . .	\$26.00	<u>\$26.00</u>
		\$13.00 Profit

The first chief of the department was Jacob Spanier, who served from 1910 to 1914. He was followed in turn by the following:

Edward N. Thiel	1915-20	Herbert Hoffman	1957-59
Roy R. Weaver	1921-25	Peter Halfman	1960
Benjamin Klein	1926-36	Nicholas Thiery	1961-63
Henry Halfman	1937-39	Ralph Keilman	1964
Benjamin Klein	1940-44	Nicholas Thiery	1965-70
William Kirby	1945-47	Clarence Monix	1971
Frank Miller	1948	James Halfman	1972-77
Walter Hoshaw	1949	Clarence Monix	1978-81
Nicholas Thiery	1950-55	Sam DeYoung	1982-84
Anthony Gerlach	1956	Dewey Snow	1985-current



Chief Dewey Snow

From the very beginning of the department, the St. John Volunteers always elected their chief and assistant chief, as well as the Board of Directors, and that policy is still followed today. The department now has over 35 men and eight pieces of equipment.

The improvement of the town's fire fighting ability has brought about a reduction in classification from 8 to 6, which is reflected in lower insurance rates.



The growth of St. John has also meant a growth of the Fire Department. Compared to one piece of equipment years ago, and then two a little later, the eight pieces of equipment now owned by the department forced the fire department to double the size of their fire station in 1986.



1987 St. John Fire Department. Back row left to right: Anthony Casboni, Matthew Casboni, Randy Harmon, John Stabler, Vince Casboni, James Kovanic, Joe Govert, Tom Reder, Jim Gineris, John Hemphill, Gerald Spohn, Bob Upchurch, Pat Thornberry and Richard Millard. Front Row left to right: Bob Jacobsen, Fred Willman, Jim Wozniowski, Pete Monix Dewey Snow, Sam DeYoung, Rich Zaleski, Jack Smith and Denny Wilson.

Some thought was given to building a second station at another location, but after a thorough study, it was determined that the present site was adequate for both the current town limits and the proposed future town limits. There is sufficient room remaining on the site for the additional facilities which may be necessary in the future.

Always striving and training in order to render the best possible service to the town, the Fire Department in 1981 received the annual award from the Indiana Volunteer Firemen's Association as the best Fire Department in Indiana's District No. 2



## THE ST. JOHN POLICE DEPARTMENT

The St. John Police Department came into existence with the incorporation of the town in 1911. It started as a one-man force when Nicholas Boecker was appointed as the first Town Marshal. The appointment was made at the first Town Board meeting of the town on December 4, 1911. Boecker's pay was set at \$300 per year. For 60 years the police force remained a one-man operation with the Marshal operating out of his home, but quite often volunteer deputies were used, and these deputies received no pay for their services.

It was in 1950, when Robert Miller was the Town Marshal that the first squad car was purchased. It was an 8-cylinder Ford costing \$1,554. Much of the money was raised with a benefit dance with the balance coming through bank financing. As the town began to grow part-time deputies were used more and more, but it was not until 1965 when the part-time police officers began to be paid for their services.



Nicholas Boecker  
First Town Marshal

From 1911 to 1965 part of the duties of the Marshal was to act as the Street Commissioner, and in 1941, with the construction of the town's water utility, the Marshal was also put in charge of the Water Department. The Marshal continued with these duties until 1965 when the Town Board felt the work load of the Marshal was increasing to the extent the street and water responsibilities should be removed from his shoulders.

In the early years before electricity came to the town it was also the duty of the Marshal to light each of the gas street lights every evening and to turn them off in the morning. Ralph Scheidt, a long-time resident remembers

watching Town Marshal Peter Portz walking through town each evening, his revolver wrapped in a handkerchief



and tucked in his hip pocket, turning on the gas lights. This duty of the Marshal remained in effect until 1921 when the first electric street lights were installed. It was this same year when the salary of the Town Marshal was reduced from \$50 a month to \$40 because he no longer had to turn the street lights on and off. Evidently this resulted in a dispute between the Town Board and Marshal Peter Portz and he was removed from his job and was replaced by an all-volunteer force with Joseph M. Gerlach at the head, with Charles F. Thier, Joseph P. Thiel, Eberhard J. Thiel, James Peterson and William Koehle making up the rest of the force.

Records do not indicate how long the first Town Marshal Nicholas Boecker, served in that office, but some time between 1912 and 1917 Frank A. Klassen was appointed Marshal, and he resigned on January 2, 1917. He was replaced by Bernard Berg on that date. Berg served until August 9, 1918, when he was replaced by Peter Portz.

There is no indication in the records as to how long the experiment with the aforementioned "all volunteer force" lasted, but sometime prior to 1928, Alfred Specht was named Marshal, and he lasted until August 6, 1928, when the Town Board once again abolished the position of Town Marshal. However, this decision lasted only two months, and on October 1, 1928, the Board relented and named George Dewes to the position. Dewes owned a motorcycle and did his patrolling on the powerful black machine.

It would seem from the early records that the office of Town Marshal was a controversial one as the Town Board made many changes and accepted many resignations by holders of the office. Generally in the town's books of record, few references are made to the Town Marshal. In most instances he is referred to as the "Street Commissioner", with no name to indicate who he was. As a result, it became difficult to determine who was Town Marshal, and when. Some names have probably been unknowingly overlooked.

On June 12, 1944, Eberhard B. Dewes was appointed temporary Marshal, but it is not known how long he served. The records do show that Robert Miller, grandson of the first Town Board President, John Miller, served as the Town Marshal around 1950 when the first squad car was purchased.





Robert Miller

Walter Hoshaw, who later became county highway superintendant, also served as Town Marshal in the 1950's.

The most colorful and controversial Marshal was Henry Carr. He was appointed around 1953. Carr was a tobacco chewer and his language was rough and profane, but one way or the other he got the job done. The inside of every squad car he drove became stained with tobacco juice, as there were times when he would forget to roll down the window, or would miss the open window. Carr was a tough cop and many times over-zealous in the

performance of his duty. On one such occasion he gave his wife a ticket for parking on the wrong side of the street at the postoffice. Any person walking down the street with a briefcase became a target for his one-man drive against peddlers.

In the early 1960's Carr took the antique fire bell, no longer used by the fire department, to his home and placed it in his front yard. Only when the fire department threatened to have him arrested for theft, did he return it.

Carr constantly conducted a drive against speeders in town. In most cases it was judgment on his part when he made an arrest. Radar was not used in those days, but if it was possible he would follow the car for a short distance in order to get a clock on the speed. If the driver appeared to be driving too fast in his judgment, that was all Carr needed. He kept a constant flow of speeders going to the Justice of the Peace. St. John established the reputation of "speed trap town," and many drivers from all parts of the country were able to attest to the speed enforcement.

Early in 1963 Carr stopped a car on Route 41. In his opinion the driver was speeding. The car, containing two women and their young children, was approached by Carr. He proceeded to give them a lecture in language that was not used in front of women and children in those days.



He then issued them a ticket. The two women were so offended by Carr that they promptly drove to the Indiana State Police Headquarters in Schererville and reported the incident to the commander. He in turn reported the incident to William Tuley, President of the St. John Town Board, and suggested that something be done to curb Carr's abusive language. Tuley decided that the image of St. John, and in particular, the Police Department, had to change. He instituted a quiet search for someone to replace Carr.



James E. Larimer

When a retiring Hammond police officer, James E. Larimer, agreed to take the job, Carr was notified that he would be retired as of July 1, 1963.



New Town Marshal, James Larimer, left, receives revolver from retiring Marshal, Henry Carr, with Town Board President William Tuley smiling his approval.



Larimer retired from the Hammond Police force after serving 22 years. He had reached the rank of Captain of the Traffic Division and retired as Desk Sergeant. Larimer brought professionalism to the one-man department in St. John. He immediately began to upgrade the police work and to keep accurate records, something that had not been done before. It was under Larimer that the use of full-time deputies on a regular schedule was instituted.

In 1968, a combination Town Hall office and Police Station was constructed adjacent to the old town hall. A police radio communications center was installed and for the first time a radio message could be transmitted to the St. John squad car without going through the Lake County



Town Marshal James Larimer instructs Radio Dispatcher Gloria Larson in the use of St. John's new radio equipment.



Sheriff's Office. St. John became the smallest town in Indiana to have its own radio communications center. Slowly the work of the Police Department became a more proficient operation.

On Saturday morning, February 20, 1971, at approximately 7:30, tragedy struck St. John. Town Marshal James Larimer, who had become a friend to everyone, was shot to death, along with Indiana State Trooper John Streu. A third officer, State Trooper Pete Popplewell was wounded in the shootout that took place near the north entrance to Kolling School on Route 41.

The custodian at the school noticed a car parked near the north entrance. The car contained two men who appeared to be sleeping. Thinking that there might be something wrong, the custodian called the St. John Police Department. This was before the police department had instituted a



Fellow St. John Police Officers carry Town Marshal James E. Larimer to his final resting place. Both sides of the path were lined with hundreds of police officers from Northern Indiana and Illinois.

full 24-hour patrol in St. John, working only from 8:00 a.m. to midnight seven days a week. Consequently, Officer Robert Ponton was scheduled to go on duty at 8:00 a.m., and had not yet arrived at the station. The radio



operator called Larimer at home and advised him of the car at Kolling School. Larimer told her he would go check out the car, but asked her to notify the Indiana State Police for back-up, because St. John's squad car was brand-new and did not yet have the radio installed.

Larimer and Streu arrived at the scene approximately at the same time. They both parked their cars close to the car that contained the two men. Both officers got out and determined that there were two young men in the car. Obtaining the license plate number of the car, they returned to Streu's squad car and radioed the license number to State Police Headquarters for a determination as to whether or not the car had been stolen. When the reply came back negative, both officers returned to the parked car.

The officers ordered Lonnie David Williams of Hammond to return to the squad car with them; the other occupant, John Robert Lee, of Greenville, Kentucky, to remain where he was in the car. As the two officers were questioning Williams in the squad car, Lee left his automobile and approached the squad car, apparently unnoticed by the police officers. Lee then shot Larimer as he sat in the car. The wounded police officer managed to get out of the car, and as he lay wounded on the ground, he fired at Lee, inflicting several wounds.

In the meantime, Streu was busy handcuffing Williams in the back seat of the squad car. when this was done, he radioed State Police that there had been a shootout and Larimer was wounded. Just as he finished sending this message, Williams, although handcuffed, reached over into the front seat and grabbed Streu's revolver. As Streu jumped from the car, Williams shot him in the back. Streu fell to the ground and Williams then went over to the fallen officer and shot him at point blank range.

At this time, State Trooper Pete Popplewell arrived on the scene and was promptly wounded by Williams. No sooner had Williams wounded Popplewell when Trooper Joseph Kirk arrived. As he jumped from his car with his pistol in his hand, Williams tried to shoot him, but the gun was now empty. He threw down the gun and begged the police officer not to shoot him. Two police officers lay dead and a third officer and Lee were wounded - all this on a Saturday morning that otherwise would have been a quiet, peaceful, routine day in the lives of everyone.

St. John, the small town, was instantly swarmed upon by television crews, radio newscasters and newspaper reporters. Calls came from



newspapers and radio stations all over the United States, wanting to know the details. It was several days before peace and quiet returned to this community. The shock of the tragedy left its impact on St. John residents for months. Both Lee and Williams were convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life in prison.

The absence of a Marshal had placed a tremendous burden on the



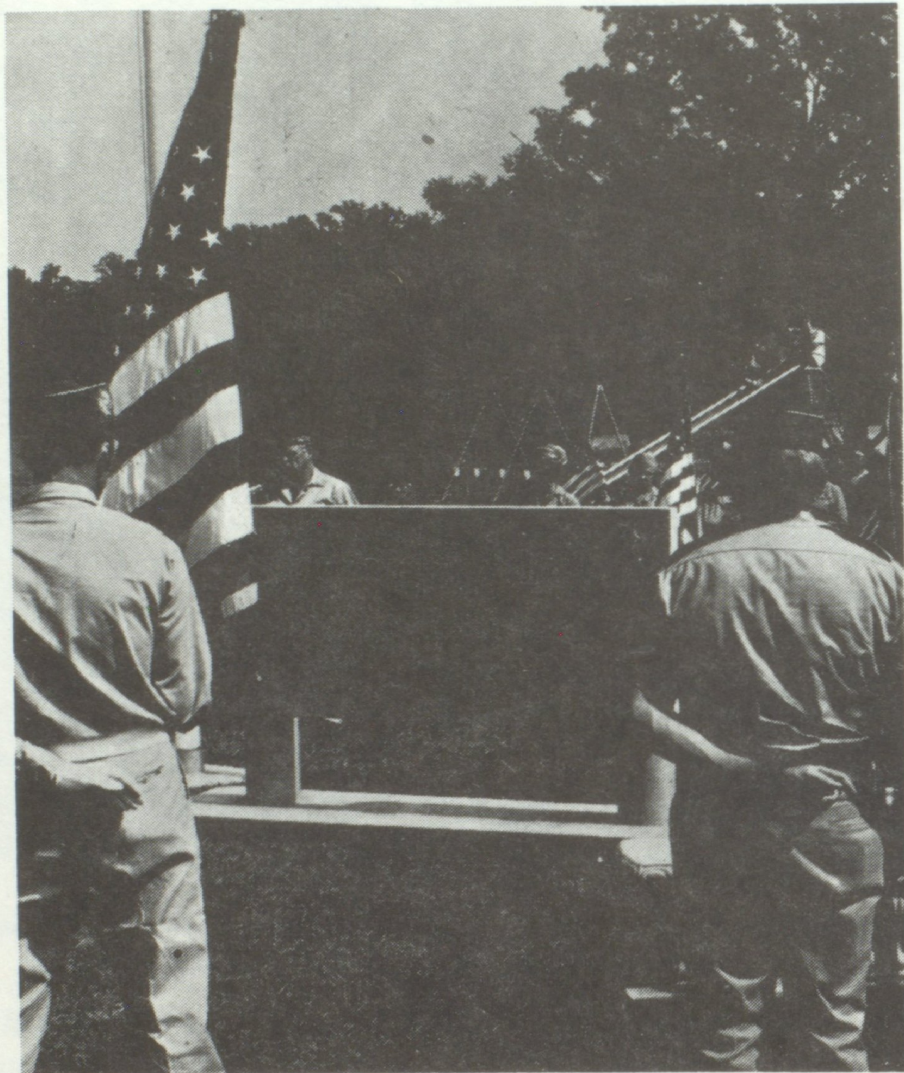
Cedar Lake Police Chief, Edwin Moody, presents a Posthumous Award to Ruth Larimer, widow of slain St. John Marshal, James E. Larimer.

shoulders of the Town Board and the Police Department, now made up of only part-time patrolmen, working elsewhere for a living, but devoting their nights and week-ends to police work in St. John. These men were dedicated and did the best they could under very trying circumstances.

On June 15, 1861, almost four months after the death of Larimer, a new Marshal was sworn in. Ron Schweder, who had served several years on the Highland Police Force, received the appointment. This came after the Town Board had interviewed and gone over the applications of dozens of



applicants, one from Florida and another from Louisiana. After the appointment of Schweder, Town Board President William Tuley announced that he was "going fishing tomorrow." And he did.



St. John VFW Post 717 Color Guard stand before the Monument to the memory of James E. Larimer, Town Marshal, at the dedication of Larimer Park on Labor Day, 1971.





New Town Marshal Ronald Schweder is sworn into office by Town Attorney Albert C. Hand with Clerk-Treasurer Betty Siedelmann and Town Board President William Tuley looking on.

St. John took its first step toward a full-time police department on November 8, 1971, when Robert Ponton, who had been a part-time officer for several years, was sworn in as St. John's first full-time deputy. For some time during this year, actually starting the day that Larimer was killed, Town Board President William Tuley had been quietly discussing with other Town Board members, Hugh Smith and Eugene Smith, the possibility and need to create a full-time Metropolitan Police Force for St. John. On February 14, 1972, just about one year after the shootout, and after considering all aspects, pros and cons, and legal ramifications of a Metropolitan Police Force, the Board voted to place the question on the ballot in the May Primary Election, as required by law.

The Town Board had only two months to sell their plan to the town, going on television, using the newspapers and special meetings to which the





Lake County Clerk of the Circuit Court, Nick Krochta, administers the oath of office to St. John's first Police Commission. From left: Krochta; Victor Monnett; Thomas Smitley; and Stanley Grelecki.

public was invited. Just prior to the election, a letter of explanation was mailed to every voter in town. The efforts of the Town Board paid off with a 3 to 1 vote in favor of a Metropolitan Police Force.

A Metropolitan Police Commission was immediately appointed. The three-man commission was made up of Victor Monnett, Stanley Grelecki and Thomas Smitley. Marshal Schweder's title was changed to "Chief" and Robert Ponton was changed from Deputy to Patrolman. Shortly after this, two more full-time patrolmen were added to the roster, Richard Meyers and Steve Peterson. The part-time officers who had made up the department for many years were gradually phased out until the department was completely full-time, seven days a week.



On November 14, 1974, Schweder resigned as the chief to take the same position with the Schererville Police Department.

Robert Ponton, now a veteran on the St. John Police Force, was named acting chief. he remained in an acting capacity until February 10, 1975, when he was named chief. he still serves as chief today.



Chief Robert Ponton

By 1980, the department had grown to eight officers, all fully trained at the Indiana Police Academy, with a squad car for each man. The theory behind this was if each man was responsible for his own car he would take better care of it instead of leaving it for the next man on duty. This practice has proved to be beneficial.

As of the date of this publication two more men have been added to the force, bringing the total to 10, with car-per-man policy still in effect. How long this policy will continue is anyone's guess, as it will start to become quite expensive to continue this practice if more men are added to the department.

Aside from the fact that the car-per-man policy has been very good from a maintenance standpoint, it has also meant that more cars are visible on St. John streets at any given time. No longer can a person think that because he sees the squad car going south that he can speed going north.

Growth and development in St. John has also meant an increase in traffic and all problems related to traffic, as well as problems in general. The quiet, peaceful atmosphere gradually has begun to fade away, although St. John's police problems remain lower than many other communities in Lake County.

When Marshal Larimer and State Trooper Streu were slain behind Kolling School in 1971, it seemed to foretell problems yet to occur. For instance, in November of 1983, St. John Patrolman Doug McClusky was seriously wounded as he chased a prowler through



Lantern Woods Subdivision late at night. Evidently the prowler had an accomplice who was in hiding, and he shot McClusky. The officer was wearing a bullet proof vest, but the shot entered the officer's body just below the vest. McClusky recovered from the wound, but the prowlers were never caught.

On May 28, 1985 another tragedy struck St. John when James Koslow went on a berserk shooting spree, killing three persons and wounding five others in the K-Mart Store, and also outside the store. Koslow was eventually shot and killed by St. John Police Officer Richard Conaway as he started to open fire on the police officers.

The investigation that followed the shooting disclosed that Koslow was a depressed individual with a nagging back problem and was disgusted with the doctors because they had not been able to

# St. John officer is shot

**ST. JOHN** — A patrolman who was wearing a bullet-proof vest was shot and seriously wounded early Sunday as he chased two prowlers.

Patrolman Douglas McClusky, 26, was admitted to Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in Dyer with a wound in the abdomen.

He was wearing a bullet-proof vest but the shot entered below the waist.



Douglas McClusky  
... shot by prowler

search by a number of area police units.

McClusky, of Schererville, underwent surgery Sunday and was listed in guarded condition today in the intensive care unit.

The gunman and his companion escaped on foot and managed to elude a massive

The shooting occurred outside a home in the 8800 block of Lantern Drive. McClusky saw one suspect and was pursuing him on foot when the other man stepped out of the brush and opened fire.

McClusky served on the Schererville Police Department from 1978-79, followed by a year on the San Diego, Calif., Police Department. He joined the St. John department in 1980.

Cpl. Richard Kouder, who was in the police station when McClusky called for backup, responded immediately. Arriving at the scene, he found McClusky had been shot. All other off-duty officers and the fire department were called in at once to assist. Units from the Indiana State and Lake County Police and police departments from most surrounding Indiana communities and some in Illinois joined in the search for the gunman and his companion.

cure his problem. However the investigation further disclosed that he had been a user of drugs and alcohol at various times. A search of his home disclosed enough weapons and ammunition to enable him to start his own little war, which he did. Also found were books on guns and survivalist-type warfare books.

No one will ever know what was going on in Koslow's mind, but the various police reports, and by the doctors who had treated



# Shooting unfolds

By SILVIA ASCARELLI  
and DONALD CAZENTRE  
Times Staff Writers

ST. JOHN — A 37-year-old St. John man injured in Tuesday's shooting spree was transferred late Wednesday to the Spinal Cord Intensive Care Unit at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

Gregory Roderick, who was shot by a lone gunman as he stood outside the Kmart store on U.S. 41, was taken by helicopter from Our Lady of Mercy Hospital to the Chicago hospital about 9 p.m. A spokesman for Our Lady of Mercy said Roderick was in critical but stable condition when transported.

Pat Miller, a spokesman for the Chicago hospital said Roderick is in serious condition today. He is awake, conscious and can speak.

She said he is demonstrating paralysis from the mid-chest area down

through the rest of his body. He suffered multiple chest trauma.

Miller said the bullets entered through Roderick's spine and deflected up to the collar bone.

She said doctors at Our Lady of Mercy had removed his left lung during surgery Wednesday. Northwestern doctors are still evaluating him and further surgery may be necessary, Miller said.

James Koslow's shooting spree in and around the Kmart store on U.S. 41 left three people dead and five others injured. Koslow died after he was shot twice by St. John police Officer Richard Conaway.

Preliminary autopsy reports issued Wednesday by the Lake County Coroner's office show 31-year-old Koslow died of a gunshot to the head. He was also hit by one bullet in the buttocks.

Autopsy reports show Marlene Jancosek, 35, died of internal injuries caus-

ed by a gunshot wound to the left chest. George Murr, 36, died of a gunshot wound to the chest, and Margaret Novak, 50, died of internal injuries stemming from a gunshot wound to the abdomen, the reports say.

It is not yet clear exactly how many times each victim was shot, said coroner's spokesman Ray Sufana.

Police investigating the incident, which began about 6 p.m. Tuesday, say Koslow was apparently heading home for a store of weapons and ammunition when he was shot by Conaway.

Police discovered the weapons, described as the type popular with "survivalists," in Koslow's bedroom, according to St. John Police Det. Bernard Johnsen.

"The way he was heading when he was shot was a straight line to home," Johnsen said. "He could have held

(continued on next page)

him indicate that he was truly a "paranoid loner" type of an individual who had few friends, and probably no clear purpose for life in his mind. Some day his feelings would overcome his ability to think clearly, and the situation would cause an explosion. That is just exactly what happened on the May day.

As with the Larimer and Streu shooting, this affair also put St. John in the news nationwide as well as many foreign countries. Friends of this writer read about it in their newspaper in Hereford, England. However, it is a terrible way for a small community to get into the news, but it is something they have no control over. It can happen any time, any place.

The K-Mart Store, scene of the shooting, was severely damaged by the gunfire, and was closed for a week. This time was also used to bring in a psychologist to address the store employees to ease traumatic memories of what they had been through. St. John survived the 1971 killing at Kolling School, and they will, and indeed have survived this tragic affair as well.



To get a clear picture as to the increase of problems, minor or otherwise, a look at the records shows that the total case load for the St. John Police Department in 1979 was 2,897. At the end of 1986, this figure had increased to 4,401 cases, or an increase of 52% in an eight-year span. As this account is being written an update of the department records shows that St. John's officers are making more traffic arrests per month than Munster, Highland, Dyer or Schererville, all larger communities to the north.

In past years, the chief, or Town Marshal, was the only officer with a rank. By now the department has also grown in rank to Chief, Lieutenant, Patrol Sergeant, Detective Sergeant, Corporal and five Patrolmen. In addition there is a Head Radio Operator, two full time operators, and three part time operators, and a secretary to the Chief. She also fills in as a radio dispatcher.

# Gunman had an arsenal

himself up in the house and it would have been very difficult to get to him."

The gun Koslow used during the spree was an H-K 97 semi-automatic rifle. Found in the bedroom were a disassembled 9mm UZI automatic rifle, a semi-automatic 12-gauge and two to three clips of ammunition, Johnsen said.

The 12-gauge and a still unfound .44 caliber magnum pistol were purchased Friday for \$275 and \$150, respectively, according to receipts police found from Sporting Arms Inc., 13901 S. Burnham Ave., Chicago.

In his application for the guns, Koslow falsified his address and listed his former Illinois address of 10719 S. Avenue O, Johnsen said.

Miller said he possessed a current Illinois firearms license.

Police don't know how long Koslow owned the UZI but he's had it "for a while," Miller said.

A total of 1,000 rounds or more of

ammunition were found at the home, Johnsen said. A lot of 9mm ammunition was found in a cannister used to bury valuables in the ground that can be purchased through survivalist magazines, and police believe some weapons many have been buried.

Police also found several pictures of weapons, Johnsen said. Johnsen said Koslow posed with the weapons in some of the pictures.

Police also found a flak jacket in Koslow's room, and a silhouette gun target in the trunk of his car.

The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is assisting police in tracing where Koslow purchased the weapons, Johnsen said.

"They are not weapons used for hunting, but they can be purchased legally at sporting goods stores," Johnsen said.

Books hidden in the basement included books on silencers, a U.S. Marine Corps book on sniping, "Typical Foreign Unconventional Warfare

Weapons," "The Poor Man's James Bond" and "Improvised Weapons of the American Underground."

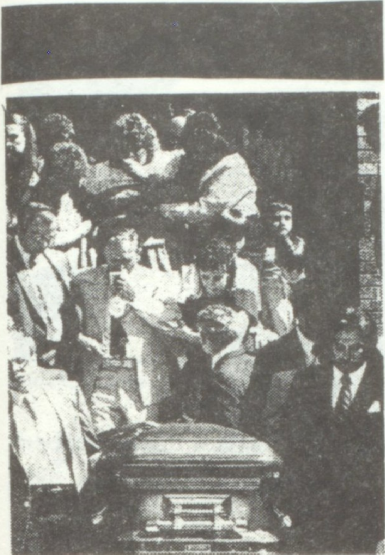
They are "the kind of books that were very popular in the 60s with the hippies" and can be purchased through advertisements found in survivalist magazines, Johnsen said. Police have no evidence that Koslow was affiliated with any such group.

Police said they also found two vials of prescription medicine, which they displayed wrapped together with packing tape and a lawyer's business card, and a small black notebook in which Koslow had sporadically listed and dated what drugs he was taking and how much he was spending on treatment.



Detective Sergeant Bernard Johnsen had been asked to join the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force, and he worked undercover for the agency. There was some doubt about this in the minds of the town officials, but Johnsen was working undercover on his own time so that he was never away from his St. John duties. To further

# 2 victims buried



*The body of Margaret Novak is brought out of Holy Name Church followed by her husband, Joseph.*



Times graphic by Design Editor JERRY COUGHERS

## Koslow paranoid loner

dispel any doubts they had, the Town Board members were invited to participate as onlookers on a massive drug raid in Lake County. They came away feeling proud that a member of the St. John Police Department was a member of this group.

As mentioned earlier in this book, in 1968, St. John became the smallest community in Indiana to install its own radio communications center, and was the first of the small Lake County Communities to go this route. In April of 1985, the department became the last to install the Computer System, aided by a grant from the Criminal Justice System.

This gave the department instant access to State Police Computer system. Within seconds, and without using the telephone they can determine if there is an outstanding warrant on an individual, if a car is stolen, or if the driver has a false registration. This, along with other information needed immediately by police departments, has been a great help to the St. John Police Department.

Memories of that February day in 1971 when St. John Town Marshal James





Post-Tribune photo by Karen P. Puller

## Killer's background discussed

St. John police Wednesday revealed information they have gathered about James Kozlowski, the gunman who took three lives before he was shot to death by a

policeman Tuesday. From the left are Chief Robert Ponton, Detective Bernard Johnsen and Sgt. Tom Miller.



Larimer and State Trooper John Streau were killed and a third offier, Tropper Pete Popplewell was woulded, have been brought back to many people each year for the past six years.



*A sign near the path of the gunman's shots expresses St. John's determination to persevere*

The two young men responsible for the shooting are still serving life sentences. Lonnie Williams is serving two life terms, and John Lee is serving one life sentence. Indiana law at the time of the sentencing gave the two killers the right to a clemency hearing after serving 10 years of their sentences. Williams has now applied for clemency six straight years, while Lee has applied the past two year. Granting clemency does not mean they will be freed, but it does make them eligible to request and immediate parole hearing, and there is always a chance they could be freed. So far the requests have been denied.

However, because there is always the chance that clemency and parole may be granted, a few people who remember February 20, 1971, go to work against the possible granting of clemency. St. John Police Chief, Robert Ponton, former St. John Police Officer George Bellamy, former Commander of the State Police Post in Schererville, Ed Moody, and the wounded State Trooper, Pete Popplewell, along with William Tuley, St. John Town Board President at the time of the incident, attend each clemency hearing and testify in opposition to clemeny.



# INDIANA

Sunday, March 1, 1987

B-13

## Tuley continues clemency fight

By MARILYN ZELLERS  
Times Correspondent

ST. JOHN — Feb. 20, 1971.  
It's a date Bill Tuley refuses to forget.  
Tuley's good friend and town marshal, James E. Larimer, 56, and state trooper John Streu, 26, were shot to death behind Kolling Elementary School.

The killers, John Lee, 17, and Lonnie Williams, 23, received life sentences for the murders. They are in the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City.

Williams has applied to the state parole board for clemency for the last six years. And each year, when the application goes before the parole board, Tuley is there asking that clemency be denied.

He annually circulates anti-clemency petitions throughout south Lake County.

The clemency hearing is Friday in South Bend.

Tuley says he'll present the petitions to the parole board not only to lend impact to his appeal, but to "point out that this is proof that people in this part of the state haven't forgotten what happened, and they want them to remain in jail."

A park in St. John has been named in memory of Larimer.

There are other reasons Tuley's dedication is unflagging.

He is driven by a compelling force of memories.

"I hired Jim Larimer," Tuley said. Tuley was town board president then.

"I hired him to come out to this tranquil country from Hammond, where he had retired from the police force there." Larimer had achieved the rank of captain in Hammond.

"I feel a little bit responsible in that respect, and also because we did become close friends," he said.

Here's how Tuley remembers the shooting:

"It was a Saturday morning. A janitor was the only one inside Kolling School. He saw a car parked behind the building, with two fellows sleeping in it.

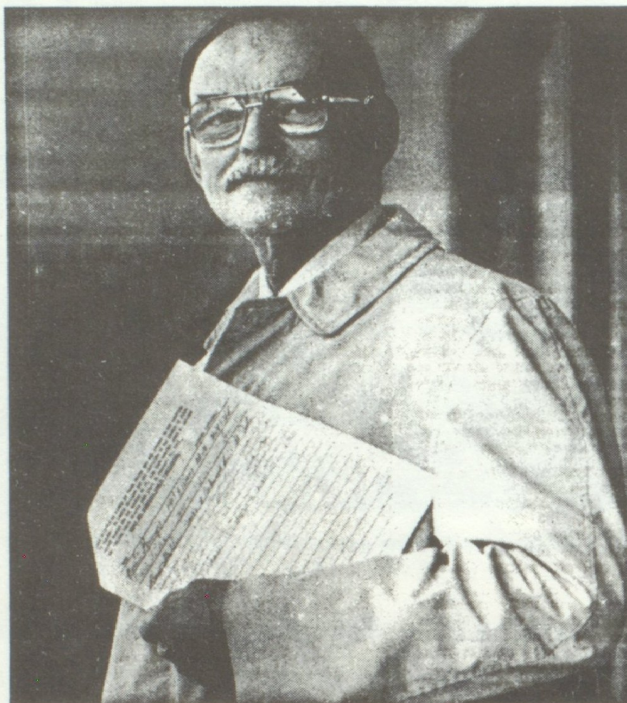
"He wondered why they were there and called the police.

"Larimer took the call and on his way there, radioed the state police (then headquartered on U.S. 30 in Schererville) that he wanted a backup while he investigated a suspicious car.

"He (Larimer) arrived first. Seconds later, state trooper John Streu pulled up, parking the squad car in such a way that the other car couldn't get away.

"They walked over to the car and took Lonnie Williams to the state police car. Streu sat in front, and Larimer was in the back seat with Williams," Tuley said.

The car had been stolen, but there was no report on it when Streu radioed in the plate number because the man in Indianapolis



Times photo by Michael Zajakowski

### Tuley petitions against clemency for two convicted murderers

from whom it was taken in was still locked in a motel room, Tuley said.

"While they were talking to Williams, unbeknownst to them, John Lee got out of the car, walked up to the squad car and shot Larimer.

"Streu turned and handcuffed Williams but he didn't have the opportunity to do it the proper way, cuffing his hands behind his back," Tuley said.

Streu radioed that Larimer had been shot.

"Larimer got out of the car, fell to the ground, and shot Lee several times," Tuley said. (Lee recovered from his wounds.)

Williams reached over the seat, grabbed Streu's service revolver and shot him, Tuley said. Streu got out of the car and fell to the ground.

Williams, still handcuffed, "blew Streu's face away" with the trooper's service revolver, Tuley said.

There was a lot of gunfire and Williams shot Larimer again, he said. Another state trooper, Pete Poppelwell, had gotten the call for help. He pulled into the school lot,

but before he got out of the car, Williams fired at him through the windshield of the squad car, wounding him.

"Another state trooper rushed in. Williams tried to shoot him but was out of ammunition. The officer drew his gun and ordered Williams to surrender.

"That's how they captured the pair," Tuley said.

Lee was sentenced to life imprisonment on one count and Williams on two counts.

Tuley said that after 10 years of a life sentence are served, a clemency application can be petitioned. "Lee has applied twice and will probably apply later this year," Tuley said.

Williams has applied every year since his 10th year of imprisonment.

Clemency doesn't mean that they'll get out of prison. It merely means that if clemency is granted, they are eligible for parole before the allotted number of years, Tuley said.

In this case, it's life. On one count, parole is eligible after 20 years. It's after 30 years on two counts, Tuley said.

"I also remind the parole board that they (Williams and Lee) were sentenced to life. Let's make life imprisonment mean exactly that," he said.

Tuley said he also reminds the parole board that the prisoners still have certain rights.

"They have the right to a fair trial, which they received; they have the right to appeal for clemency every year. The only right they don't have is the right of freedom.

"Larimer and Streu no longer have any rights. They also destroyed the rights of the victims' wives to live with their husbands. The Streus had been married just six weeks when this happened," Tuley said.

Accompanying Tuley to the Friday hearing will be St. John Police Chief Robert Ponton, former Police Chief Ed Moody and Poppelwell.

And, they'll be carrying what they hope will be hundreds of signatures on petitions Tuley has distributed to town offices in Schererville, St. John, and Dyer. Petitions are available for signing in the town halls, clerk's offices and police departments.

Tuley said petitions will be delivered to Highland and Cedar Lake Police departments as well.

Besides their annual attendance, they are responsible for hundreds of letters sent to the Parole Board and thousands of petition signatures. A total of 2,129 signatures were personally presented to the Parole Board this year (1987) at the clemency hearing.



This year, for the first time, Tuley's group ran into tremendous opposition at the hearing. A large group of church affiliated people, including several teenagers, were there to testify that Lonnie Williams was now a Born Again Christian and should be released back into society. Their pleas were passionate and tearful. Even scripture was quoted in his behalf. Then Tuley, Ponton, Moody, Popplewell and another representative of the State Police Legal Department gave their testimony in opposition to clemency, in a very calm manner. Tuley stated afterwards that it was difficult to keep his temper and to keep from shouting back at this group. It was exceptionally difficult when one of the women during her testimony called Tuley a liar, and that the murders did



St. John Police Officers, 1987, top row, left to right: Patrolman Randy Harmon, Patrolman Richard Conaway, Patrolman Jim Arrvia, Sergeant Richard Kouder, and Patrolman Eric Andersen. Front row left to right: Corporal Douglas McClusky, Lieutenant Thomas Miller, Chief Robert Ponton, Sergeant Bernard Johnsen, and Patrolman Frank Chapranda.



not happen the way he stated.

After the hearing these individuals gathered around Tuley and his group and began to heap verbal abuse on them, until security guards broke it up and escorted Tuley and the others to their car. Clemency for Lonnie Williams was once again denied. This is the sixth time, but the group is already making plans for 1988, because they know Williams will try again. After all, he has everything to gain and nothing to lose.



St. John Radio Operators, left to right: Dale Poston, Sally Smith, Sue Broukal, Michele Carey, and Tim Patriarca.



Head Radio Operator: Debra Farrenkopf



Secretary to the Chief  
Michelle L. Haluska





St. John Police Commission, left to right: Phil Keckich, Jay W. Moody, and Jeffrey Miller



DANIEL A. THIEL

St. John Building Commissioner

Dan Thiel, Building Commissioner for St. John was born and raised in St. John. Born in 1914, Thiel has seen the community grow from around 500 at that time to its present 4,400 or more by this year, 1987. He was first employed as a Building Inspector in 1957. At this time the inspector's job was only a part-time position, as



there was not too much construction going on.

In the 1970's, his title was changed to that of Building Commissioner, and the job became full time employment. Along with supervising construction, he was now also in charge of the Electrical and Plumbing Inspectors. Thiel has

Dan A. Thiel and Secretary  
Mary Lou Miller

now been an employee of the Town of St. John for 30 years. In addition to long time employment, he was appointed to the St. John Plan Commission in 1949, the first year the commission was created in St. John.

As a member of the Plan Commission Thiel was an advocate of strong building codes. At one time St. John had one of the strongest building codes in the State of Indiana. In the early 1980's, the state passed its own State Code, which was a less stringent code than St. John's, and as a result St. John cannot enforce their code, as it is in conflict with the state law. Dan Thiel served on the Plan Commission until the end of 1986, a total of 37 years.



CLARENCE "PETE" MONIX  
Director of Public Works

For many years the Street and Water Departments of St. John operated under the supervision of the Town Marshal, and there were no full-time employees. When a certain job had to be done the Marshal hired someone to do the job. Clarence "Pete" Monix started his employment with St. John in 1953 as a part-time employee. He worked in this part-time capacity until 1963 when Town Board President William Tuley convinced his fellow board members that there was enough work required by the town to warrant placing Monix in a full-time position.

In 1966, the Town Board decided that it was time to restrict the Town Marshal to police duties in order to devote full time to upgrading that department, and at the same time placing Monix in complete charge of the Street and Water departments. This arrangement worked out very well for both the Town Marshal and Monix. In the mid-1970's, Monix was given the title of Director of Public Works, and in 1986, the Department of Sanitation was also added to his responsibilities.

The Department of Public Works has now grown to a six-man work force, with a total of 10 vehicles, including 5 snow plows and other types of equipment for their use. During the summer months the maintenance of an ever-growing park system is also their



Back row,  
left to  
right:  
Herman  
Monix, Rick  
Stroh, John  
Stabler.  
Front row,  
left to  
right,  
Ralph  
Keilman,  
Pete Monix,  
and Derwin  
Neitzel.





Clarence "Pete" Monix clean and properly maintained vehicles. The men don't go home until these various cleaning jobs are performed. It saves the taxpayer money, and it most certainly creates pride.

responsibility. Winter snows are probably the department's biggest challenge. It has been said often that Monix never goes to bed in the winter time without first checking the weather forecast, and then goes to sleep with one eye on the window.

Vehicle maintenance is often a problem with municipalities, because no one really cares, but the St. John employees do care, and their equipment is cleaned and cared for daily, especially in bad weather.

This writer seriously doubts that any other city or town, county or state department can match St. John for



THE TIMES Sunday, April 19, 1987 A-13

# Former librarian's novel career began long ago



Times photo by Mary Anne Prashina

Gertrude Schutz says crocheting is her favorite pastime; she made afghan at left

By MARILYN ZELLERS  
Times Correspondent

ST. JOHN — Gertrude Schutz is a pioneer of sorts.

The retired librarian's odyssey with books began 27 years ago in what was a far cry from the present computer-based Lake County Public Library system.

Back in 1959, St. John's Library Branch was shared with Independence Hill in Merrillville. The traveling library, a house trailer, was pulled by a truck and parked for a week at a time in the St. John the Evangelist Church parking lot on U.S. 41.

Electrical wires were attached to a utility post, and Schutz climbed aboard.

She said she was never alone there "too long."

"We did have quite a little business in the trailer and we tried to keep books that were very current," Schutz said.

"You couldn't keep a whole lot, but you tried to keep what was most in demand. We could only keep one set of encyclopedias, for instance."

But even with today's automation, books are still delivered the old-fashioned way — by courier.

"During the trailer days, you could order a book and then about two weeks later, when the trailer was returned, the books would more than likely be there," Schutz said.

The library delivery system is now done on a daily basis, the books ordered directly through computer terminals.

Before the terminals were installed (about five years ago), books

**'During the trailer days, you could order a book and then about two weeks later, when the trailer was returned, the books would more than likely be there'**

were ordered by teletype machine.

"I hate to say it, but it was easier," Schutz said. "Automation is great, as long as it's working."

In other words, if someone pulls the plug, look out.

Schutz' own story could probably make an interesting heartwarming book.

The quiet, dignified woman, who turned 65 in March, said she retired "because it was time."

"I had made up my mind a long time ago that I would like to work until that age. I'm happy it worked out that way."

Those words belie the struggle that confronted Schutz 33 years ago, when, pregnant with her seventh

child, and in her 14th year of marriage, her husband suddenly died. Two and a half years later, she contracted polio.

Schutz, who wears a brace on her left leg, said she was ready to go into an Indiana rehabilitation program when she was offered the librarian job. "I thought I could do it," she said.

"So I took the chance and gave it a try. I figured I could always enter the rehab program later."

She never did.

Her every-other-week stint in the traveling library soon became a full-time job. The Independence Hill librarian took an extended leave of absence. Schutz stepped in.

Eventually, the trailer, weakened by years of hauling heavy books, was deemed unsafe.

"When the trailer gave out, we rented a couple of rooms in a motel across from where the library is now," Schutz said.

The two-motel-room library was used for two years. In August, 1966, the move was made to the new (and present) building at 9450 Wicker Ave. (U.S. 41). The one acre farmland was donated to the library system by Dr. Hedwig Kuhn in memory of her husband.

Schutz worked alone there for the first 10 years. Then a part-time assistant, Nell Thierry, was hired.

After 13 years in the various locations, she was transferred to the Dyer branch library. Three years later, she was moved back to St. John. Thierry staffed the library until Schutz returned, then worked full-time with Schutz.



The St. John Library has not always been located at its present site, nor was it even in a building, and an essential part of the library which many in St. John thought would be there forever is gone.

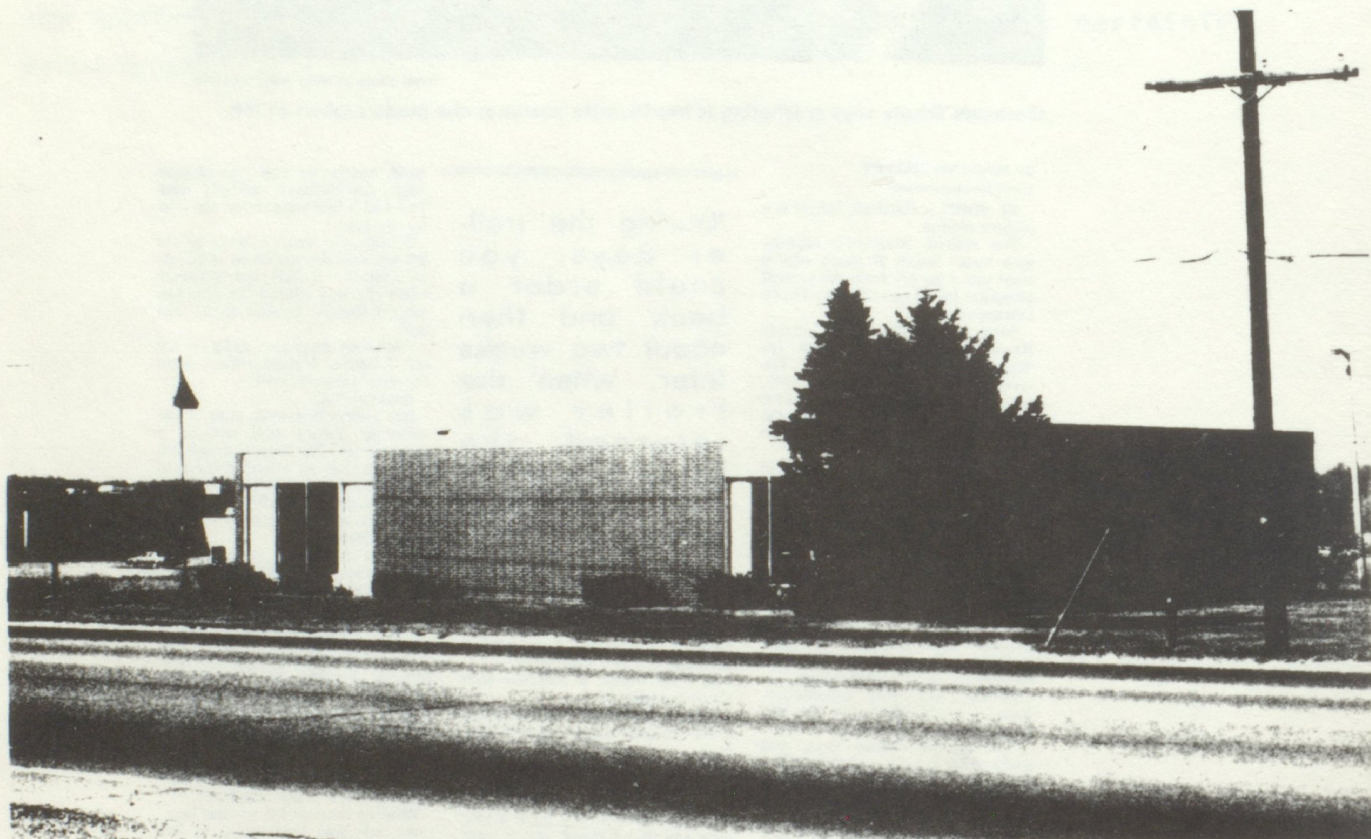
Gertrude Schutz, the Librarian retired in 1987 after serving in that capacity for 27 years.

The library has always been a part of the Lake County Library system, under the control of the Lake County Library Board.

For many years the only library St. John had under this system was a traveling mobile library that shared its time between Merrillville and St. John residents.

Gert, or Gertie, as she was affectionately called by her friends, remembers those pioneer days of the trailer. The trailer would be parked in the parking lot of the St. John the Evangelist Church, and would remain for a week before moving on.

It wasn't too bad in the summer, but when the cold of winter set in it was a very



Hugh A. Kuhn Memorial Library



uncomfortable place to be, both for Mrs. Schutz and for library customers.

In the early 1960's the Library Board rented a couple of motel rooms directly across the highway from its present site. It wasn't long after that plans were made to construct a permanent building at its present site.

This was a major undertaking for the Library Board, as they did not have funds to buy the land and also construct the building.

They needed a gift of land. This is where former Town Board member Hal Foltz entered the picture. He farmed the land from the library location west and south to include the K-Mart/Mercantile Bank area and also the area that is now known as Homestead Acres. That farm was owned by Dr. Hugh A. Kuhn and his wife Dr. Hedwig Kuhn. Foltz convinced the Kuhn family to donate two acres on the northeast corner of the farm to the Library Board, the only restriction being that the library be called the "Hugh A. Kuhn Memorial Library." That is why and how St. John got a real library.

This writer was on the Library Advisory Board along with Hal Foltz at the time, but if it had not been for the efforts of Hal Foltz, the library probably would not have been built for many more years.

The "Hugh A. Kuhn Memorial Library" was completed in 1966, amid much fanfare and speeches. After all, it was the newest library in Lake County.



## ST. JOHN PARK BOARD

For many years St. John had only one park, called Civic Park. This park was adjacent to the Town Hall, and was opened, operated and maintained by the Civic Club of St. John. Money for the park's upkeep was raised by ice cream socials and card parties held by the Civic Club.

In the late 1960's the Muenich family donated to the town a 4-acre parcel of land. The land was to be specifically used as a park to be called Woodland Park.

In 1971 the park was renamed Larimer Park in honor of St. John Town Marshal James E. Larimer, who was shot to death behind Kolling School earlier that year. A monument in his honor stands in the park.

A Park Board was created in the early 1970's, under the Indiana Law of 1965 allowing for the creation of Park boards, and granting them the right to establish their own budgets and giving them the right to float bond issues. All of these monetary rights had to be approved by the Town Board.



ST. JOHN PARK BOARD 1987. Left to right: Paul Anderson, Ralph Ehresman, and Caroline Petrick. Not shown is William Samuelson.

Now, in 1987, there are a total of five parks in the town and a sixth is leased by the Park Department.

The Civic Club, which for so many years had done an excellent job with their park, finally had to disband for lack of interest. As a farewell



gesture, they deeded Civic Park over to the Town of St. John, instead of to the Park Board. However, it matters little, as the Department of Public Works has the job of maintaining that park as well as the ones under the control of the Park Board.

In 1986, the Town Board passed an ordinance requiring new subdividers of land to turn over to the Park Department a portion of that land to be used as a park, or to make a cash donation, equal to the value of the land, to the Park Department.

Previous Town Boards had rejected this idea for many years, because they felt it was a form of blackmail forced on the developers. In a sense, it was telling the developer that he had met all the requirements for development, but that he could not do it unless he paid in money or land.

Budget money for use by the Park Department remained very small for a good number of years, but by 1987 they were beginning to receive a more reasonable amount of tax dollars for use in the parks.



## ST. JOHN'S OLDEST BUSINESSES

Three of St. John's business establishments, the St. John Elevator, Pierce Iron Works, and Schilling Lumber Company have been in business here for over 40 years and are still thriving today.

Two of them, Pierce Iron Works and Schilling Brothers Lumber were established around 1946, and they have survived through war, peace and recession, while other businesses have come and gone. Going into business for yourself, and making it a success, has always been the American dream for the individual. These two businesses have done just that. They have survived with determination and shrewd management.

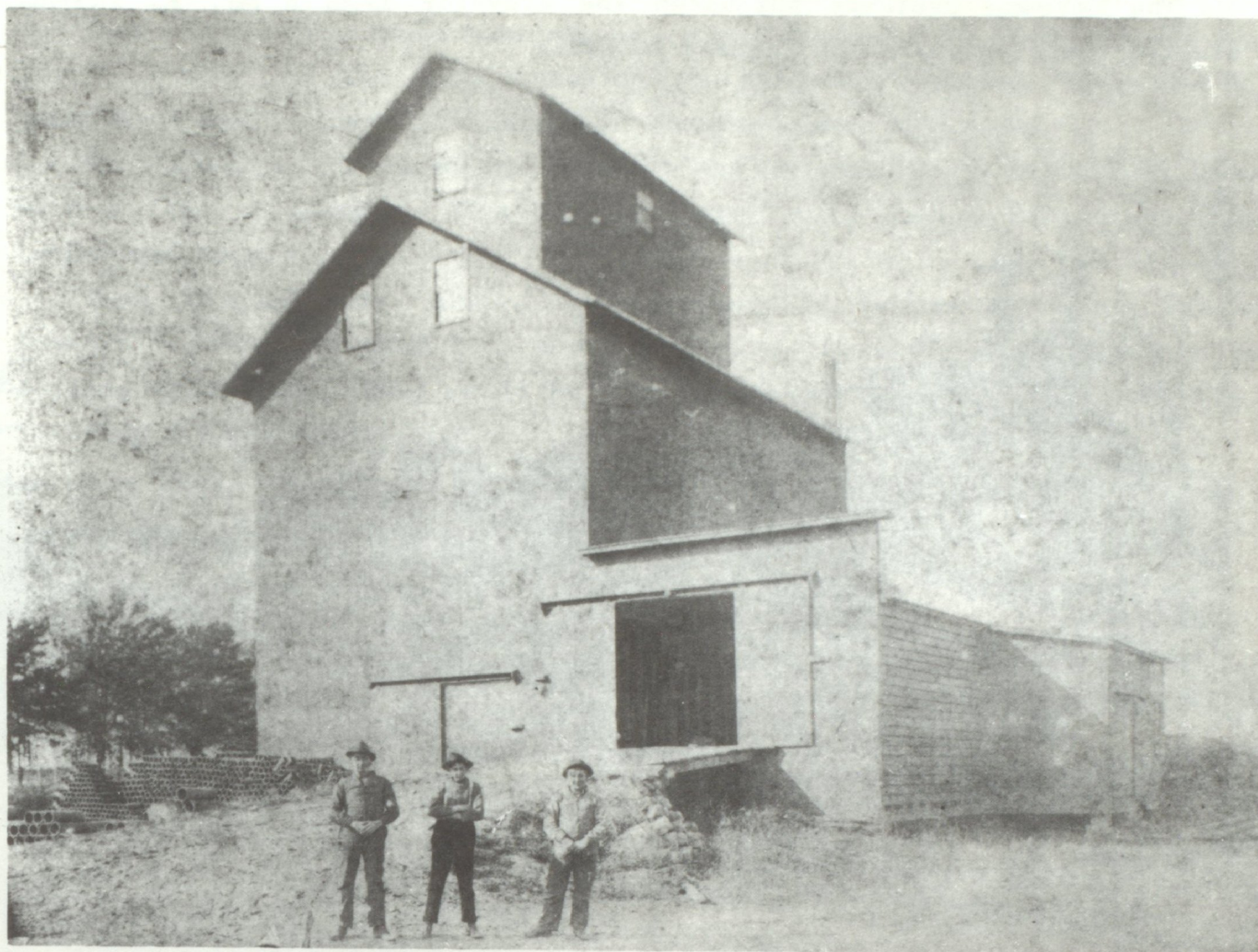


### PIERCE IRON WORKS

Pierce Iron Works was founded in 1946 by Willard F. Pierce. In 1952, the business was incorporated and turned over to his son-in-law, James Thiel, who still runs the business today. When the economy went down in the late 1970's and early 1980's home building came to a halt, and the business suffered. Now with the building of homes starting again the business for the iron works has picked up.



The St. John Elevator is by far the oldest existing business in St. John. Constructed prior to 1890 by George F. Gerlach, the business has had several owners since those early years.



Picture of the St. John Elevator taken in 1897. Man at the left is thought to be George F. Gerlach. The others are unidentified.

Present owners are the DeYoung brothers, Sam, Bill, Bernie, George and Wesley. The information on the elevator was furnished by Sam DeYoung, who explained that the entire area in the vicinity of the elevator was the center of business in St. John. Behind the elevator was a slaughter house. Across the street, the building now occupied by Lil'Rascals Day Care Center, was Gerlach's General Store. Just to the east and on the north side of Thielen



Street was Gerlach's Hotel and Saloon. Also in the nearby area was the railroad station, conveniently located for shipping milk and beef from Gerlach's slaughter house north to Chicago.

The DeYoung brothers purchased the elevator from a Mr. K. Dykema and started their operation on January 2, 1952.



St. John Elevator as it is today

#### THE SCHILLING FAMILY BUSINESSES

The largest commercial enterprise in St. John is owned by various members of the Frank and Louis Schilling families, and consists of several businesses located in the town.

It's a fair assessment to say that the Schilling Brothers are responsible for a good portion of St. John's commercial growth, not only their own businesses, but in bringing other businesses into St. John.

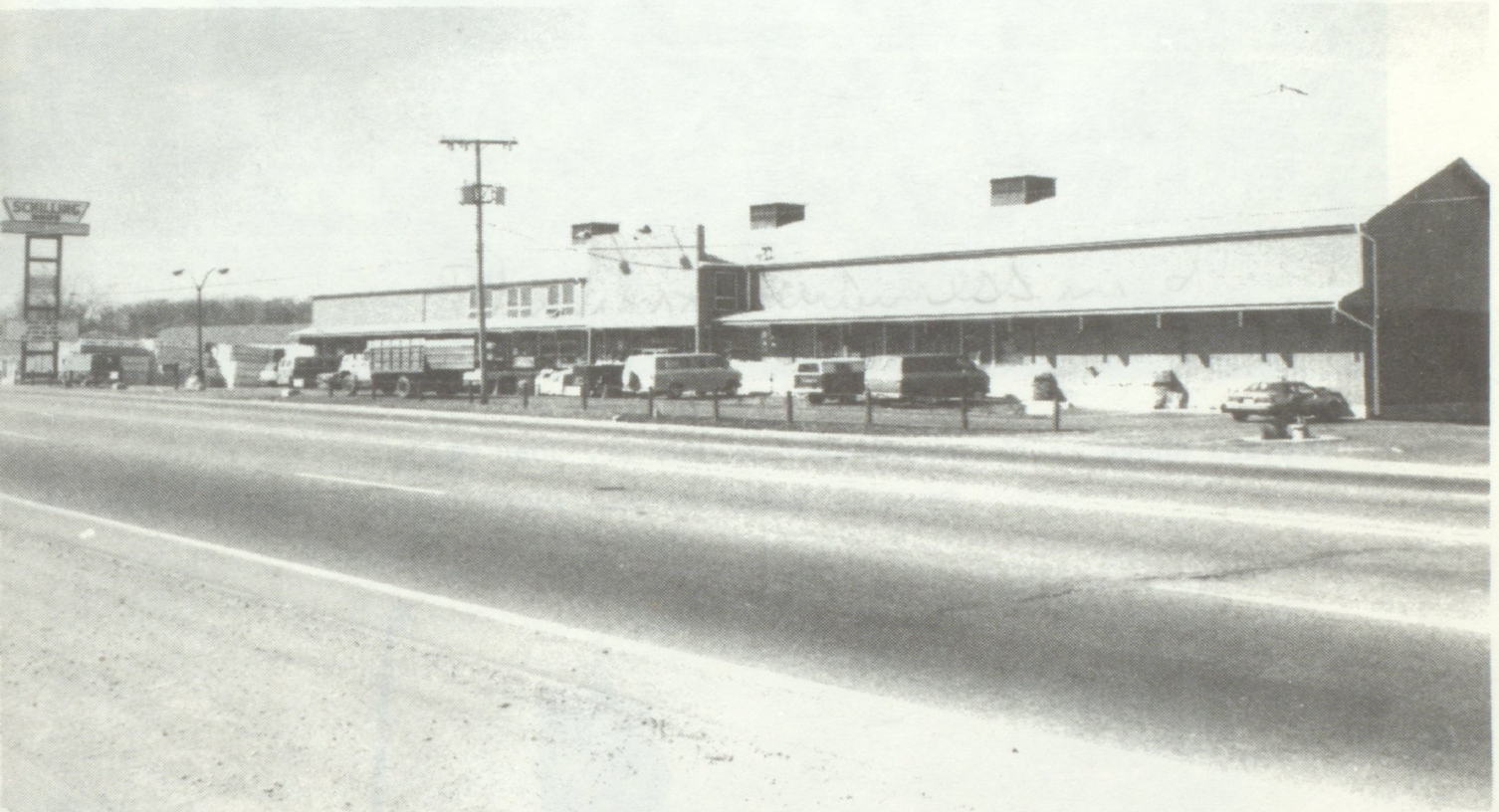


Twin brothers, Frank and Louis Schilling, opened a gasoline station in St. John in 1932, 55 years ago. The station was located on the east side of Route 41 on the site that is now occupied by Jim's Repair Service.

Even though their main business was a gas station, the two brothers sold a little lumber on the side, picking up bargains whenever they could, or purchasing small orders of lumber for customers whom they knew.

The business continued until World War II when Frank and Louis went to work at the shipyards. When the war ended they opened Schilling Brothers Lumber and Supply.

They started out small, never expanding before business warranted expansion. When you went into the lumber yard you never found Frank or Louis sitting at a desk. They would be working in the yard, making a delivery, or building a house somewhere.



SCHILLING'S LUMBER AND SUPPLY

The business has grown tremendously over the years, with many expansions and the addition of a complete hardware line, plumbing and electrical supplies, paint, kitchen and bathroom supplies.

They were never afraid of competition, but rather welcomed it, as their



motto has always been "we can sell it cheaper."

Branching out from their lumber yard many years ago, they opened the Mobil Station on its present site, and also a restaurant that was attached to the building.

A few years after that the Schillings constructed the St. John Shopping Mall, that included St. John's largest grocery and meat market, and the town's first drug store, and Barney's Restaurant that was owned by the Schillings.

Later expansions in that area included a motel and a trucking business east of the Mobil Station. In addition to this, a son, Mike, owns the Gasoline Service Station and Garage at the corner of Route 41 and Joliet Street.



Picture above is the north half of the St. John Mall.

Picture below is the south half of the St. John Mall.





After they built the Mall, they enticed the First National Bank of Cedar Lake to put a branch bank here. This bank is now Bank One, and they were instrumental in bringing a doctor into the Mall when it opened, and if the St. John Mall was not there, and had not been constructed, the many small businesses located there would not be in St. John.

Another interesting factor is that the Schilling Brother's businesses are locally and family owned, and not owned by any of the national chains.



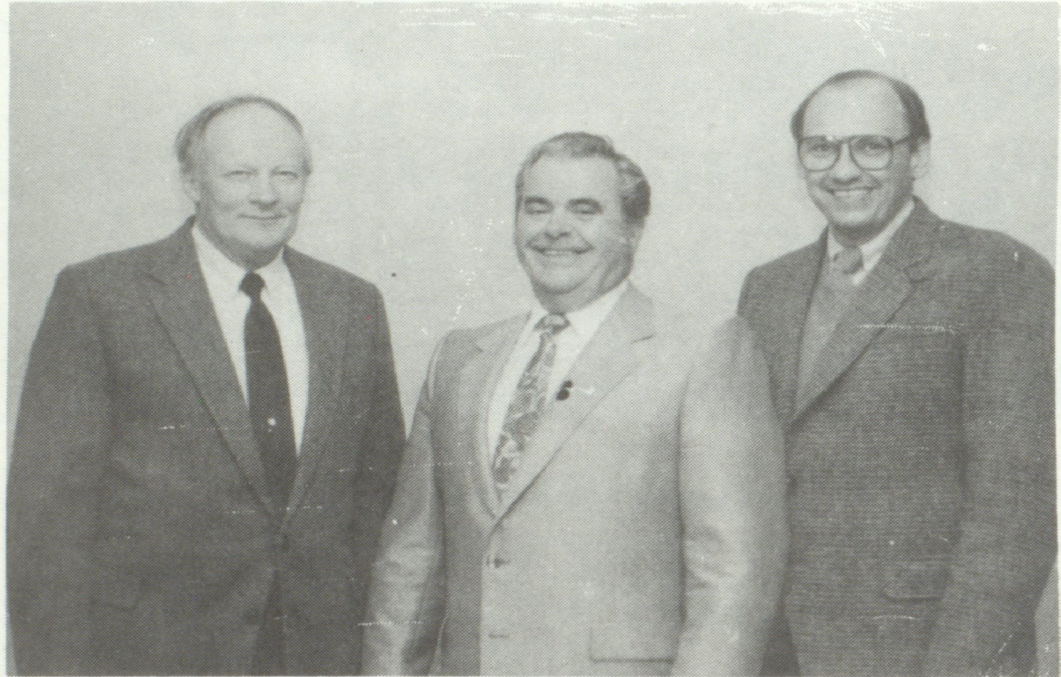
## THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

## THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

In an effort to promote business growth for St. John, a Chamber of Commerce was organized in the late 1960's. The organization lasted less than a year because of a lack of interest and membership.

A second attempt was made about three years later, but this also failed for the same reasons. However, by 1980, St. John's business growth had begun to increase and there was new interest in organizing another Chamber of Commerce. This time the effort was successful.

The St. John Town Board in the late 1970's created an Economic Development Commission. This body could approve low-interest loans for businesses desiring to locate in St. John. However, this is not as easy as it sounds,



1987 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION left to right-Sam DeYoung, George Bellamy and Robert Meinzer

as the interested business first had to find a bank that was willing to make them an E.D.C. loan, which would be backed by the government. This done, the E.D.C. could then make the appropriate approval before the bank would release the loan.

The E.D.C. did not have the legal right to solicit businesses for these



loans. Nor did they actually have the money to lend. The monetary part of it was strictly between the United States Government and the banking industry.

Mercantile National Bank of Hammond became the first business to locate in St. John and use an E.D.C loan for construction of their branch bank located south of the K-Mart store on Route 41.

Because the Mercantile was the first business to use this approach in the late 1970's it was hoped that other businesses would follow suit. This did not happen, as the economy of the nation, and most importantly of Lake County, had started to fall rapidly. Unemployment rose, development came to a

standstill and businesses were not interested in locating south of Route 30.

In the next couple of years there were several businesses that came before the E.D.C., but money was tight, and interest rates were high. Banks were no longer interested or willing to make low-interest loans.


In 1986, the E.D.C. formed a joint steering committee with the Chamber of Commerce. This committee was to be used to promote the Town of St. John in an effort

to interest business to locate here.

It is too early to tell if their efforts will be successful, but they are making every effort to improve the St. John tax base by bringing in new business.

As mentioned earlier in this book, there was tremendous opposition and unnecessary delays for the approval of construction of the K-Mart General Store in 1982. Most of the opposition came from the residents of the Homestead Acres Subdivision.

The construction of this store has been a much needed asset to the Town of St. John's tax base, as well as to the residents who now do not have to travel



MERCANTILE NATIONAL BANK



out of town for some of their shopping.



JOINT CHAMBER-E.D.C. STEERING COMMITTEE  
left to right-Jon Krumm, Sam DeYoung, Georgene Resney,  
Ron Estep, Robert Meinzer, and George Bellamy.

This writer has not been in any of the K-Mart stores anywhere that have been as clean as this one is. That, of course, is a credit to the manager who is determined to keep his store as clean as the surrounding area. Perhaps opposition to the store has also helped to promote and maintain cleanliness.

By the same token, opposition to the construction of the store may have been the reason why a major grocery chain and a major clothing store, both interested in St. John, lost their interest after all the publicity surrounding the protests.





ST. JOHN K-MART STORE

#### BANKING

For many years there were no banks in St. John. In the very early days if a resident needed some extra money he could go to Francis P. Keilman, the local merchant, and if he felt the man's credit was good, he would lend him the money.

Now there are three banks in St. John, or to be technically correct, two



SECURITY FEDERAL SAVINGS AND LOAN

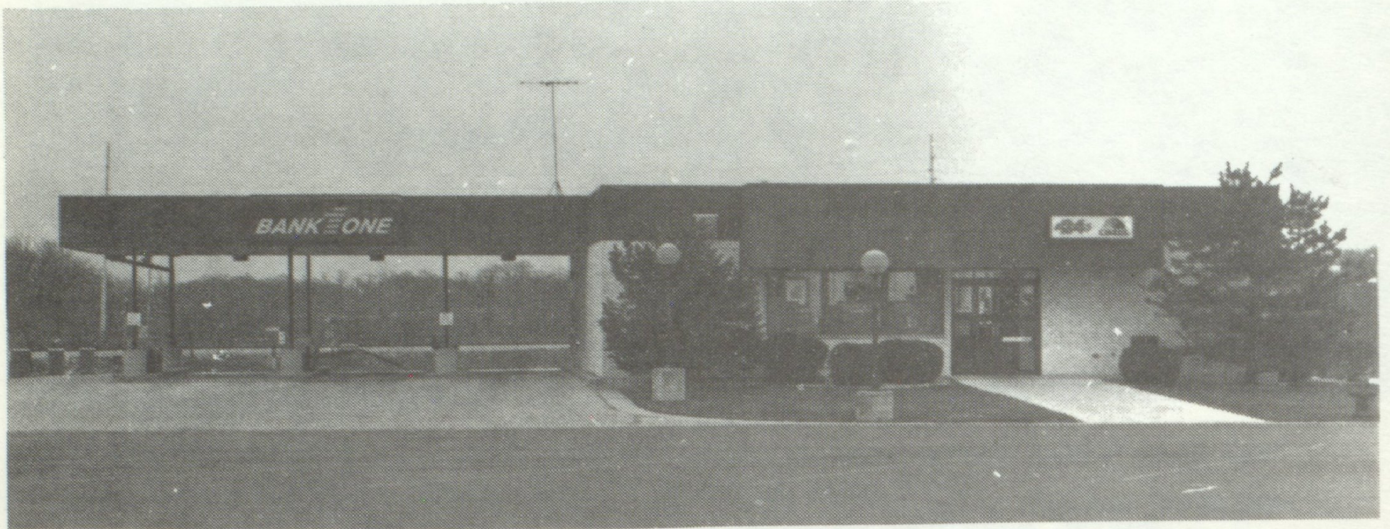


banks and one savings and loan are now located here.

The first was Security Federal Savings and Loan. Their story is mentioned earlier in the book. Their new facility, located on the southeast corner of 93rd Street and Route 41, is on the site where the home of Peter Thiel once stood.

The next bank to locate here was the First National Bank of Cedar Lake, which then became Northwest Bank of Indiana, and then Bank of Indiana. In 1896, the Bank of Indiana was purchased by Bank One, a large Bank Holding Corporation located in Ohio.

Prior to Bank One, Bank of Indiana had constructed new facilities on the



BANK ONE

east side of the shopping mall. The prior location had been in the offices at the northwest corner of the mall.



## ST. JOHN SCHOOLS

Lake Central School Corporation, covering St. John, Schererville, Dyer, and the unincorporated area of St. John Township, continued to grow with increased enrollment in the past 10 years.

This growth was taking place during a period of time, the 1980's, when school systems in the larger urban areas of Lake County were seeing a decline in enrollment, closing some schools and consolidating others.

As mentioned, this was not the case in St. John Township, where by 1987 the total enrollment increased to 6,220 students. Of this total, the two schools in the Town of St. John, Lake Central High School with 2,168 students, and Kolling Elementary School with an enrollment of 354 students, meant that 41% of students in the Lake Central School Corporation were attending school in the Town of St. John, the smallest town in the township.



LAKE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Lake Central High School was built in the mid-1960's. Reasoning behind selecting St. John as the site for the new school was that of the three communities of Dyer, Schererville and St. John, St. John was the closest to being in the center of the Township.

The school opened its doors in 1966, and has turned out to be an excellent



high school. To be more realistic, the entire school corporation has turned into one of the finest school corporations in Northern Indiana.

Over the years Lake Central's Marching Band has become famous nationwide as being one of the finest in the nation, and most certainly the State of Indiana.

In 1977, 1982 and again in 1984, the band won top honors at the Thomas Edison Festival of Lights at Fort Myers, Florida. In 1986, the band was named Blue Bonnet Sweepstakes winner when it received 8 trophies of 13 that were awarded to competing bands.

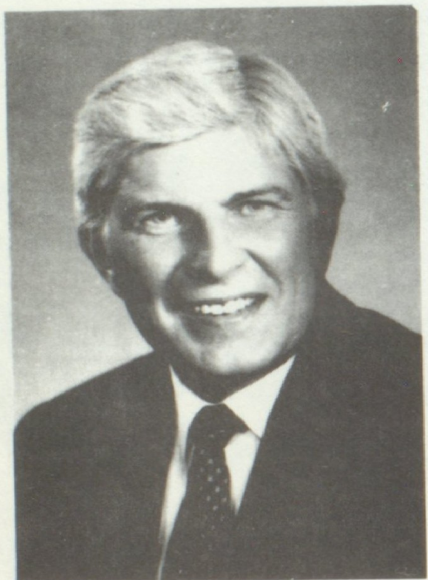
For many years the school operated its own Public Service Television Station, but the station was closed in 1982 because it had become too much of an expense burden for the school corporation to bear.

Lake Central has also had its share of athletic achievements during the 1980's. In 1982, the Boy's Cross Country Team finished 2nd in the State of Indiana, and in 1983 they finished 3rd in this same meet. In 1984, the Boy's Basketball Team got as far as one of the final four teams in the state tournament, but lost out in the first semi-final game. However, Lake Central's Milan Petrovic won the coveted Mental Attitude Award.

In 1985, Dawn Kruspe became the first Lake Central girl to win the Individual State Swimming Championship.

In 1986, Jeff Hupke of the Boy's Track Team won the State Mental Attitude Award.

In 1987, Lake Central Athletes came away with three awards. The Boy's Swim Team won the Indiana State Championship; Mike Fross won the Indiana Heavyweight Wrestling



THOMAS ROMAN  
Lake Central School  
Corporation  
Superintendent

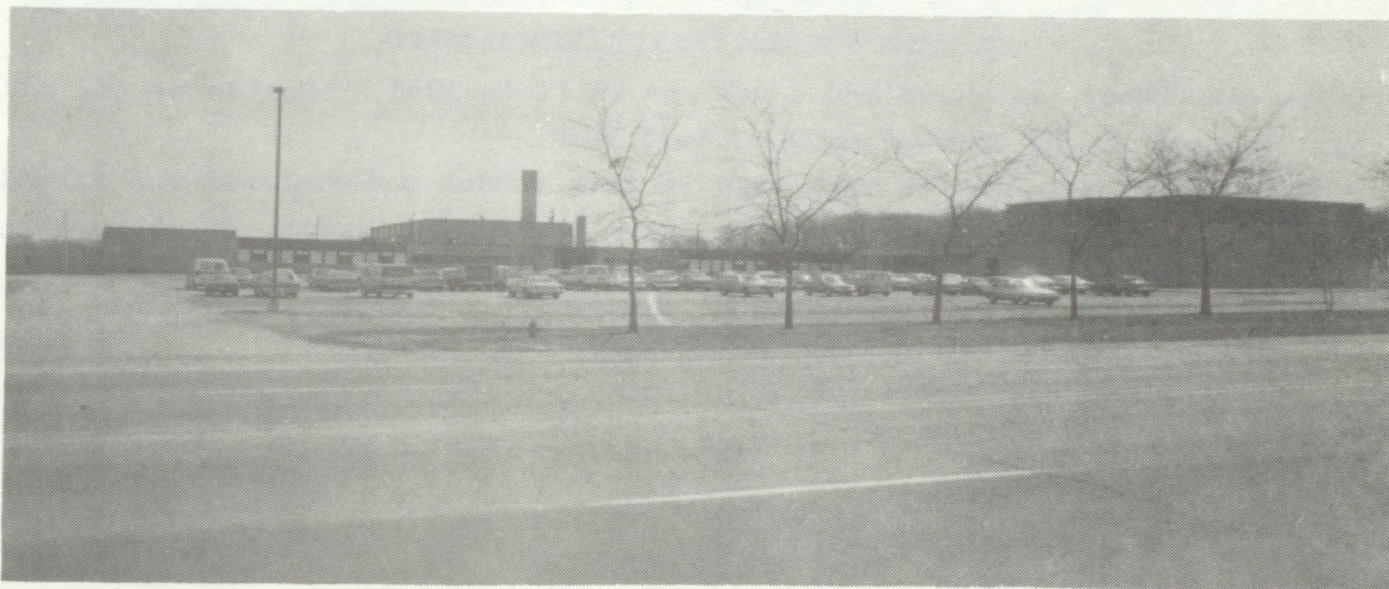


title and Jim Dunavant won the State Championship.

Beset by financial problems for several years after Indiana froze the tax levies for school corporation, municipalities, county and township governing bodies, the school corporation appealed to the voters of St. John Township, by means of a referendum to allow them to raise additional money with a tax increase. The voters turned it down. A second attempt was made in 1986, but this time a little more public relations work was done and the referendum was passed. However, this was still not the complete answer to the fiscal woes of the school corporation, but only a short-term solution.

The biggest problem, according to school officials, is the formula used by the State of Indiana to fund school systems. The Lake Central School Corporation for years had been receiving less money per pupil from the state than any school system in Lake County.

In the spring of 1987, school officials instigated a large-scale lobbying effort in Indianapolis to have the formula changed by an act of the legislature. At this time, it is not known for sure how their efforts will work out, but newspaper articles from the State Capitol report that the outlook is favorable before this session of the legislature is ended.



KOLLING SCHOOL



In addition to the two public schools located in St. John, there is also an excellent Parochial School run by St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church.



ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH SCHOOL

The old school was razed and a new one built in 1968. Mention of the old school is made in the earlier pages of this book.

The level of teaching is very high in this school and students who attend are well prepared when they leave to enter the higher grades of the public school system in St. John Township.



## IN CONCLUSION

The second edition is finished. Perhaps it could have been better. Perhaps it could have more information in it. Perhaps it could have been more accurate. However, I worked with the information made available to me. Some may wonder why all the information from the 1950's and the 1960's, and indeed even into the 1980's has been provided. The answer is that this book will hopefully provide a source of information for those who draft St. John's history in the future. I am pleased with the result, and I sincerely hope that those who read the book will be equally pleased.

William T. Tuley



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